

Praying like Daniel Session 3

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[0 : 00] Okay, let's take our Bibles now and turn to Daniel chapter 10.

Daniel chapter 10. As you're turning, just again to say it's been a delight to be with you at the retreat.

I've really enjoyed the fellowship with you men. I tried to get around to as many of you as I could at the different tables. And some of you I may not have gotten to talk to, but I tried to, but enjoyed all the fellowship.

And obviously Phil, closer and more knowledge of your churches and meeting some of you guys. And we want to continue to remember your churches in our prayers at Emmanuel.

And we trust that you will remember us in your prayers. And wow, didn't we have good food? And everything's just been really, really nice and well done for the men's retreat.

[1 : 13] And just want to commend the church here for everything that they've done. All right, I'm going to read this whole chapter. So follow with me as I read chapter 10 down to chapter 11, verse 1.

And you're going to, as we read, you're going to think, well, this is a really weird chapter. What is this talking about? Well, maybe we'll be able to understand it better when we're done. In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, a message was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar.

The message was true, but the appointed time was long. And he understood the message and had understanding of the vision. In those days, I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks.

I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth. Nor did I anoint myself at all till three whole weeks were fulfilled. Now, on the 24th day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, that is the Tigris, I lifted my eyes and looked.

And behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold of Uphaz. His body was like burl. His face like the appearance of lightning.

[2 : 24] His eyes like torches of fire. His arms and feet like burnished bronze in color. And the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision.

For the men who were with me did not see the vision. But a great terror fell upon them. So that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore, I was left alone when I saw this great vision.

And no strength remained in me. For my vigor was turned to frailty in me. And I retained no strength. Yet I heard the sound of his words. And while I heard the sound of his words, I was in a deep sleep on my face with my face to the ground.

Suddenly a hand had touched me, which made me tremble on my knees and on the palms of my hands. And he said to me, O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you and stand upright.

For I have now been sent to you. While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling. Then he said to me, Do not fear, Daniel. For from the first day that you set your heart to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard.

- [3 : 37] And I have come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me 21 days. And behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me. For I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision refers to many days yet to come.
- When he had spoken such words to me, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless. And suddenly one having the likeness of the sons of men touched my lips.
- Then I opened my mouth and spoke, saying to him who stood before me, My Lord, because of the vision, my sorrows have overwhelmed me and I have retained no strength.
- For how can this servant of my Lord talk with you, my Lord? As for me, no strength remains in me now, nor is any breath left in me. Then again, the one having the likeness of a man touched me and strengthened me.
- [4 : 37] And he said, Oh, man, greatly beloved, fear not. Peace be to you. Be strong. Yes, be strong. So when he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, Let my Lord speak, for you have strengthened me.
- Then he said, Do you know why I have come to you? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia. And when I have gone forth, indeed, the prince of Greece will come. But I will tell you what is noted in the scripture of truth.
- No one upholds me against these except Michael, your prince. Also, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I, even I, stood up to confirm and strengthen him.
- Let's pray together. Our Father, we thank you for your word. Lord, we thank you for the assurance that we are given in scripture, that all scripture is inspired of God.
- It is God-breathed and it is profitable for instruction, for correction, for rebuke, for encouragement, exhortation, and righteousness.
- [5 : 41] And we believe that, and we believe that's true of this chapter before us. And so as we look at it carefully together, we ask once again for the help of your Holy Spirit, Lord, that you would enliven our hearts and illuminate our minds, that we might taste the sweetness of your word, that we might grasp its relevance to our lives even this day and in the days to come.
- And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Just for an interruption, I left my water bottle on that pew there again, if somebody could grab it for me.
- And you know, the last time I asked somebody to do that, they did it for me, and that thing sat here the whole time, and I never drank any of it after all that work that they did. But anyway, I've got it.
- It's like a safety blanket anyway, so I have it here if I need it. All right, and of course, in a course that I sometimes teach on sermon preparation for RBS and in other contexts, one of the things that we talk about is the importance of a good introduction.
- The introduction to a sermon, it can be compared to warming up the engine of your car on a freezing morning here in Pennsylvania before it leaves the driveway, or you could compare it to the runway at an airport.
- [7 : 04] The airplane begins to slowly move down the runway, picking up steam as it goes, and the runway serves to kind of get the plane off the ground and into the air. A good introduction to a sermon, I think, can function that way.
- And it's also conventional wisdom that an introduction to a sermon should be kept fairly short. I can remember when I was, at times when I was beginning to preach, I would be thinking about the introduction, and I have this really, really long introduction that promises all kinds of wonderful things that are yet to come in the sermon.

But by the time the introduction was done, you've got 15 minutes left to kind of meet the expectations that you've created in the long introduction. So normally you want to have a fairly short introduction.

That's conventional wisdom, but it's not always the case. Dale Ralph Davis tells about a church that he sometimes visited which had a good preacher. And every Lord's Day, the sermon outline was printed in the worship folder.

The outlines, he says, were reasonably detailed. And sometimes a quick glance at the day's outline revealed that the mere introduction to the sermon would not be, well, mere.

[8 : 17] Well, as I had us turn now to Daniel chapter 10, what I just read to you in your hearing is something like that. As it begins, actually, the last section of the book of Daniel, which covers the entirety of chapters 10 through 12, a section in which the entirety of this 10th chapter that we just read, all the way to the first verse of chapter 11, serves as the mere introduction.

It's the introduction before you actually get to the detailed revelation that follows in the rest of the book.

It's a powerful introduction. It's a moving introduction. In some ways, a devastating introduction to the visions that are yet to come. A devastating introduction for Daniel, as well as an encouraging introduction.

And I believe it has much to teach us about our topic of prayer. It teaches us about the importance of persevering prayer. It also gives us a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the spiritual forces and influences that are operative in the events of the world.

And I do remind you that what we have in the latter half of the book of Daniel is a particular kind of prophetic literature, what's called apocalyptic prophecy, biblical apocalyptic.

[9 : 40] It's a form of prophecy that's marked by the use of very striking symbols and visions and numbers and things of that nature. It's highly visual and symbolic. We're not always meant to understand every little detail.

Apocalyptic literature is deliberately cryptic. In other words, it is deliberately intended by God to be mysterious and obscure at some points.

And it's the main message and the main themes and lessons that are most important. And so as my concern, as we look at this chapter, to keep that in mind and not to become too bogged down with every little detail here, our great concern is with the message and the lessons that are here for us.

And my method will be to give an overview of the content of this chapter, of the chapter 11, verse 1. And as I'm doing so, to draw out also some major lessons that are here for us, particularly as related to our theme in this retreat, learning to pray like Daniel.

So as we begin to look at this, notice, first of all, the context in which this vision was given to Daniel. First, we have the historical context. Verse 1. In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, a message was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar.

[10 : 58] This is probably a reference to the third year after Cyrus' conquest of Babylon, which would put us at 537 BC. We're given more detail in verse 4, where we're told that it was on the 24th day of the first month that the vision was given, the month in which the Passover was celebrated, followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

So it was on the 24th day of the first month of 537 BC. And not only do we have a reference to the historical context, we also have reference, secondly, to what might be called the personal context.

A description of what Daniel himself personally had been doing leading up to this. In verses 2 to 3, Daniel says, In those days, I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks.

I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. Now, what do we learn from this information that we're given here about the context?

Well, first, we learn that this vision occurred two years after Cyrus had issued a decree allowing the Jews to return home to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

[12 : 10] And that goes back to chapter 9, what Daniel had been praying about, knowing that the 70 years were soon to come to an end. And Cyrus issued that decree in the first year of his reign, according to Ezra chapter 1, verse 1.

And Zerubbabel and a small group of Jews had already set off and had arrived safely in Palestine when this vision was given to Daniel. Secondly, this information shows us that Daniel himself did not return to Jerusalem.

Now, of course, I think this raises the question, why not? He's been earnestly praying for the return of the Jews and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, as we saw back in chapter 9. But when it began to happen, he's not among those who returned.

Why is that? Well, we aren't told. But I think there could be little doubt that Daniel longed to return and wanted to return. But remember, Daniel is now in his mid to upper 80s.

He's a very old man at this point in his life. And maybe the journey was just too difficult for someone of his age. Also, the work of rebuilding the temple would be very hard, strenuous labor for someone at that age probably would not really be suited for that kind of work.

[13 : 21] And also remember, Daniel is still an official in the Persian government. And though he no doubt certainly longed to return, he may have been somewhat reluctantly convinced that he could do more good advocating for the Jews from within the government rather than returning home.

In fact, there's a sense in which what those who returned needed most was someone devoted to the secret strategic work of prayer, praying for the work, for his defense and advancement, which is the very thing Daniel was doing.

But whatever the exact reasons were there, I think there is a lesson here. And it's this when we can do nothing else, brothers, we can always pray. And indeed, prayer is the most important work of all.

And maybe that some of you feel that you're not able to do a lot for the church or for the spread of the gospel. Perhaps you don't have a lot of gifts or maybe like Daniel, you're getting old or you have some serious physical limitations or circumstances that hemmed you in so that you're not able to do a lot of things that you wish you could do.

Well, my friend, here's something that you can do. Like Daniel, you can devote yourself with even more focused attention to the important work of prayer. There's nothing the church needs more than prayer warriors like Daniel.

[14 : 49] Sinclair Ferguson, his little commentary on Daniel, he tells about a church member or a church he attended while he was a student. The church never grew to be a mega church, and yet it was through the ministry of this fairly small church.

He said multitudes, that's the words he uses, of men and women were sent out to the ends of the earth in Christian service. The church's pastor of 40 years later wrote about an elderly woman in that church.

After he had only been there for a few months, this old woman sent for him. And she said to him, I have been a widow for 17 years. Formerly, I had a Bible class of over 100 girls.

Yet it was only after my dear husband died, and I was by then rather frail and able only to sit at my own fireside and pray that the Lord gave me this burden. You have served me so long with these girls and in your local church.

But this is the task of your life, reserved for you in your 80s. You have to pray for something in Aberdeen. And how much does the church owe to secret prayer warriors like that elderly widow?

[15 : 58] Only eternity will tell. But there's more here. We see thirdly that Daniel's efforts to pray in this particular context were joined to mourning.

And partial fasting. A special intense time of mournful lament and prayer that lasted for three whole weeks. He says, I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks.

I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth. Nor did I anoint myself at all till three whole weeks were fulfilled. And this raises another question, I think. Why was Daniel mourning like this?

We aren't specifically told, but two reasons are hinted at or implied, I believe. First, he was seeking a greater understanding of the future that awaited God's people.

Chapter 8, verse 27 tells us that Daniel had found it difficult to fully grasp the meaning of the vision that he was given in that chapter. And he may still have been trying to piece everything together from the previous vision that he's given at the end.

[17 : 08] The part we didn't look at the end of chapter 9. Apparently, it was something of this nature. This desire to understand better God's revelation and what would happen to God's people that motivated his praying.

For we read in verse 12, when the heavenly visitor came to him, he said, Daniel, from the first day that you set your heart to understand, your words were heard. And I have come because of your words.

So he was setting his heart to understand. And then I think the mourning aspect of this was very likely because of what was actually happening in Jerusalem at the time.

When we piece all of these dates together and information were given in other places in the Old Testament, we can piece together what was actually happening at that time. And the reports were not good. Only a small number had returned.

Most of the Jews were content to remain in Babylon. And no doubt, Daniel has also heard that there was strong opposition to the building program. Those Samaritans and others who were dwelling in the land resisted the Jews, and they were stirring up trouble in the Persian court, making false allegations about them.

[18 : 18] And you can read all about that in Ezra chapter 4, verses 1 to 5. And remember, it says it's the third year of the reign of Cyrus. Well, in that year, Cyrus went abroad and left his son, Cambyses, to act as regent.

And in response to these lobbyists trying to stop the rebuilding project, he had issued an edict forbidding it for a time. So things weren't going well.

It didn't look good for the people of God. The work of restoration was proving to be far more difficult than anyone anticipated, and the opposition far greater.

And remember, Daniel is still serving in some capacity in the Persian government, so he would have access to reports. And I think this is probably the reason that Daniel is not only praying for three full weeks, but he's mourning and partially fasting for three weeks.

Hearing of the distressful situation in Jerusalem drove Daniel to an intensified period of mournful prayer. Well, so much for the circumstances.

[19 : 23] Next, we have, secondly, the appearance of a majestic heavenly person to prepare Daniel for the revelation he's about to receive.

Verse 4. Now, on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, that is the Tigris, I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold of euphaz.

His body was like burl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude.

And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision, but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore, I was left alone when I saw this great vision, and no strength remained in me, for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength.

So Daniel is going about his business by the side of the Tigris River, which suddenly standing before him is a man, a being that looks like a man, but not like any other man that Daniel had ever seen.

[20 : 37] In fact, it's as if Daniel scans the limit of human language to try to describe the majesty and awesomeness and power and dreadfulness and beauty of this person's appearance.

He's clothed in linen, his waist girded with gold, his body like burl, probably referring to topaz or chrysalite or something. I don't think anybody really knows what burl is.

His face like lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and legs like polished bronze, and his voice sounded like the voice of a multitude, perhaps both in strength and also in the richness of the voice, the richness of its tones, as one has said.

Daniel alone saw the vision, we're told. The men who were with him didn't see it, but they felt it. As it were, they became aware of something supernatural and a great terror fell upon them, causing them to run away and to hide themselves.

And Daniel himself was devastated by what he saw. He says in verse 8, No strength remained in me, for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength.

[21 : 48] Verse 9, While I heard the sound of his words, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground. Now the question that inevitably comes up here is, Who is this person?

Who is this person? Commentators throughout church history have had different opinions. Some think it's Gabriel. He was the angelic interpreter back in chapters 9 and 8.

The text never says that. Others think that what we have here is what's called a theophany or a Christophany. That's a pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ, the second person of the Trinity.

And we do have these from time to time in the Old Testament. Many think that's what we have here. They point out similarities between this vision and the vision that John is given on Patmos of Christ.

In Revelation 1, 13 to 16. They also point out that what Daniel sees here far surpasses the description he gives of Gabriel in the preceding chapters. And also Daniel addresses this person three times in this chapter as my Lord.

[22 : 51] Now, of course, this could just be a common way of referring to a superior. My Lord with a small L. But it could possibly mean more than that. So there are a lot of reasons for thinking that this may be a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ.

There is one fact in the chapter, though, that I think seems perhaps, as some have argued, to put a kink in that interpretation. In verse 13, this person speaks of conflict with the prince of the kingdom of Persia who has stood him.

And how Michael came to help him. And some find it hard to think of God the Son needing an angel to help him out. And then some actually think that Michael is a reference to Christ.

Because later he's referred to as Michael your prince. So which view do we take? Well, I don't think we can be dogmatic. I agree with Sinclair Ferguson who writes this.

More important than identifying the figure, it was aside from that indefinable reality a vision. Remember that, he's saying. More important than identifying the figure is recognizing the impression the vision is intended to create.

[24 : 00] Even if the figure is not divine. I personally lean to it being a Christophany. But even if it's not divine, Daniel's vision is still essentially theophanic in nature.

Because it communicated to him a sense of the omnipotence and all gloriousness of God. And what was the effect of this vision upon Daniel? Well, again, he was devastated by it.

He was emotionally and physically flattened by it. It's similar to the experience of Peter in the boat after the great catch. Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man.

Or the experience of Saul on the road to Damascus. Or John on Patmos when he fell on his face as dead. Daniel says, my vigor was turned to frailty in me and I retained no strength.

I fell into a deep sleep with my face to the ground. He was wiped out by it. Someone brought up something I was reading about a man who was once hanging about waiting to speak with John MacArthur.

[25 : 06] After a meeting where he was preaching somewhere. And when the opportunity came, he told Dr. MacArthur how he often had seen the Lord. And had visions of him.

And that Jesus talked with him. As an example, the man said, he'll come and speak to me while I'm shaving. And MacArthur's response was, I have just one question.

Do you stop shaving? As if to say, does this affect you at all? Does it even interrupt your routine? My friend, if you truly saw Christ as he is this moment, you would certainly stop shaving.

You wouldn't be having a nice little chat with him. There's the televangelist who claims that Jesus appeared to him. There stood no more than three feet from him.

And they had conversation on various topics. Oh, my dear friends, that kind of flippancy is not what we see in the Bible. In the Bible, people don't have nice little chats with Christ in his glory.

[26 : 08] And not even with angels. More often than not, they're devastated by the experience. They collapse before him. In trembling fear and utter astonishment.

You know, people sometimes say things like, you know, when the judgment comes, I'm going to tell Jesus a thing or two. No, you're not. No, you're not.

And you better wake up. Because the day is coming when indeed you are going to stand before him. And you're going to give an account for your life. And if he is not your savior on that day, you will wish that you had never been born.

I'll guarantee that. But we not only have a description of the effect. Seeing this majestic figure had upon Daniel. The chapter also describes in great detail how his words affected Daniel.

In fact, the effect that all of this had upon Daniel, it's really a major emphasis throughout this chapter. Did you notice that? It just keeps going on describing this. Most of verses 10 to 18 consists of a rather detailed description of this agonizing process of helping Daniel to get a hold of himself.

[27 : 22] And to regain his strength. And to at least get enough of his wits about him to be able to receive the vision. Did you notice that in the reading? It's all described in great detail. And of course, when you see something like that, it's on purpose.

We're intended to see that. For it to make an impression on us. Another has put it. The text could have just said Daniel had a fearful, gut-wrenching struggle.

When he saw this being and heard his words and get on with it. But it doesn't do that. Look at the description as you work your way down through the chapter. Verse 8. No strength remained in me. For my vigor was turned to frailty.

Verse 9. I was in a deep sleep on my face. With my face to the ground. Verse 10. Suddenly a hand touched me, which made me tremble on my knees and the palms of my hands.

It's like this slow, painstaking process. He still couldn't stand up. Verse 11. While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling.

[28 : 21] He finally managed to get up. But he's standing there trembling. Verse 15. When he had spoken such words to me, I turned my face to the ground and I was speechless. This was the effect of hearing his words.

He was struck dumb. Verse 16. He touched my lips and said, because of the vision, my sorrows. And I said, because of the vision, my sorrows have overwhelmed me and I have retained no strength.

Verse 17. As for me, no strength remains in me now, nor is any breath left in me. And it's not until we get to verses 18 to 19 that this one in the likeness of a man touches him and so strengthens him that Daniel is at least finally able to receive the vision that will follow.

And there's an application to be made from this. Earnest prayer. To know God's truth and being helped and caused to truly understand it and to penetrate its depths is costly.

For a man. We read in Psalm 25, 16, the secret of the Lord is with those who fear him. And he will show them his covenant. A.W.

[29 : 39] Tozer once wrote an essay entitled God tells the man who cares. And he said this. The Bible was written in tears and to tears it will yield its best treasures.

God has nothing to say to the frivolous man. Daniel was not a frivolous man. He was a man of prayer. And because he earnestly labored in prayer to understand God's truth.

He saw things and he was shown things that few have ever seen. But it wasn't easy. It was costly. It took a toll on him. You remember John?

In Revelation 10. When he was told to take the little book in the angel's hand. You remember that? To take the little book and to eat it. And the angel said to him, it will make your stomach bitter. But it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth.

And then he said, you must prophesy about many peoples, nations, tongues and kings. Prayerful, diligent, sacrificial eating of God's word. Can be costly.

[30 : 41] It's sweet in your mouth. But when it comes with it, it comes with it, the burden of the Lord upon your soul. Because its message is so serious.

So serious. And it's not pleasant for those who refuse to repent. It speaks about things that are not trivial. Things that will determine the eternal destiny of the souls of men and women.

Well, we consider the context, the appearance of this heavenly man-like person. To prepare Daniel for the revelation that he's going to be given. In chapters 11 and 12. Now let's consider the explanation given by this angelic figure for his delay in reaching Daniel.

Very interesting. Very interesting. Verse 11. He said to me, O Daniel, man greatly beloved. What a wonderful thing to have said to you.

Let me just say to you, if you're a believer in Christ, you're in union with Jesus Christ and you belong to him. You can apply that to yourself. God says to you, you're greatly beloved by him.

[31 : 57] Daniel was greatly beloved. God loved him because he belonged to him. He was one of his children. And he's spoken to in this tender way. O Daniel, man greatly beloved. So understand the words that I speak to you and stand upright for I have now been sent to you.

And while he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling. Then he said to me, do not fear, Daniel. For from the first day that you set your heart to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard.

And I have come because of your words. So the angel informs Daniel that from the very first day he set himself to this season of prayer to humble himself before God, to seek to understand, to seek him in prayer that his words were heard.

Now, remember, Daniel has been mourning and praying now for 21 days. But the angel tells him that his prayer was heard on the very first day.

He then goes on to tell him why the delay. And now here's where this gets really interesting. Davis in his commentary places this section under the heading.

[33 : 02] History is more complicated than we suppose. The angel says, verse 13, but the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me 21 days.

And behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to me for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. Okay, now I understand why the delay, right? No, I don't really understand what that's talking about.

What is that? What's that talking about? The prince of the kingdom of Persia must be some kind of angelic power corresponding to Daniel's messenger and Michael.

But this is an angelic power who opposes them. Now, as you probably know, the Bible speaks of two kinds of angels. God's angels and the devil's angels who are also called demons.

This prince of Persia seems to be a demonic power. That in some way has Persia as his area of influence and responsibility. A powerful evil spirit who's assigned to work through Persia to bring harm to God's people.

[34 : 14] To resist, as it were, the rebuilding of Jerusalem. And the advance of God's kingdom. The angel speaking to Daniel tells him that spiritual warfare with this demonic being is what caused the delay in the answer to Daniel's prayer.

And he also speaks of another angelic being, Michael, who came to help him in the conflict. And then later we see similar language in verse 20. When the angel tells Daniel that after he delivers God's message to him, he tells him, I must return to fight with the prince of Persia.

And when I have gone forth, the prince of Greece will come. And at the end of verse 21, he says, no one upholds me against these except Michael, your prince. Now, what do we make of all this? Well, we have to be careful here.

We must be careful not to sensationalize the text by going beyond what scripture tells us. But on the other hand, we must not rationalize the text either.

There are certain things we can't know for certain. And there are other things we can know that God tells us in his word. Let me mention some we can't and some we can't.

[35 : 28] For example, we don't know exactly how or in what manner this angel and this demonic prince of Persia were contending with each other. What kind of struggle was this?

What exactly was happening? The answer, we simply don't know. We're nowhere told in the Bible. But we are told that there was some kind of conflict between God's angel and this demonic force.

And we're given a glimpse of spiritual warfare in the heavenlies. Also, we don't know exactly how demonic forces are organized.

Apparently, there are those who have come up with all kinds of fanciful ideas about this. But we simply don't know. God hasn't told us and where God hasn't spoken. We need to be careful. But we do know.

We do know that there is organization and structure in the demonic world. Paul tells us in Ephesians 6.12 that we do not wrestle with flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

[36 : 35] This language describing structure and organization and rank. Something else we don't know for certain is if specific angels and specific demons are assigned to each specific nation or region on earth.

You may have heard this idea. I think it's called territorial demons. Have you ever heard that idea? There's a kind of teaching out there that every community is under the power of territorial spirits.

Who rule over them and keep them in blindness. And there's also the claim that there are certain super Christians with special knowledge given to them who know the actual names and jurisdictions of these spirits and are able to bind them and release their captives.

Well, there's no such teaching in scripture. However, this passage does at least seem to indicate to us that there may at times be certain powerful demonic spirits assigned to particular situations or places.

It will help us to remember that at this point in history, okay, Persia was at the center of what God was doing in the world for his people. It was the Persian court who allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem.

[37 : 54] And it was now the Persian government that was being influenced by the enemies of the Jews who were making false allegations about them. The important work in Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the temple and the reestablishment of that people in that place from which God had promised that the Messiah would come was under attack.

And here we learn that behind that attack was Satan and demonic forces. It may not be that specific demons are assigned to every city.

It may simply be that there was a concentration of demonic activity in the Persian court at that time in history. And the same would be the case in Greece later because of what because what was happening in those places had a direct bearing on God's people and on the outworking of God's plan and purpose.

Ultimately, we don't know for certain, but we do know that the real story behind the history of the world is more than what we read in history books.

And we know that there are demonic powers and influences at work in the kingdoms and the governments of this world that are bent on resisting the gospel and destroying Christ's church.

[39 : 16] There is an invisible war going on behind the scenes, brothers. Indeed, it's happening as I speak. In our own country and around the world.

And it's important for us to be aware of this. Daniel was learning and we must learn that the ultimate power struggle is being fought in a realm that most people know absolutely nothing about. The real power struggle is not between Washington and Moscow or Washington and Beijing or the Middle East or Russia and Ukraine.

The false ideologies being promoted even today as I speak in the halls of our own government. They are all reflections of an ancient conflict that goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden.

The conflict between the seat of the woman and the seat of the serpent between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. As one man has written commenting on our text, dark powers encompass the king's palace in Persia.

What a dreadful thought. The government offices of a nation occupied by the forces of anti-God. Quoting Davis, we have no trouble believing that incompetence and bungling are endemic to governments and political machinery.

[40 : 32] But we don't as easily think of suave and sinister spirits of evil lurking in the corridors of our congresses. Or shaping the policies of our parliaments.

But you see, God's word is pulling back the veil for us here in this passage to give us a glimpse of the unseen spiritual world. And we might be tempted to despair.

We didn't know that Christ has been seated on the throne of the universe. And he and his hosts will ultimately prevail. The final chapter of the Bible. What's the final chapter of the Bible of human history?

What is it? Well, it's simply this. Christ wins. Christ wins. But we also learn from this chapter that our prayers have a vital part in that victory.

And with that, I now want to zero in on a couple of practical lessons that are here for us. I've been making some applications all along. But the first one is what I just mentioned.

[41 : 42] The prayers of God's people are intimately linked to this cosmic conflict between Christ and the kingdom of darkness. Daniel has been praying earnestly for the people of God.

And no doubt, in light of what was happening at the time, one of the things he was praying about was that the Persian government would be favorably disposed toward God's people. And that the resistance to their building efforts would be stopped.

And now the curtain is lifted. And he's allowed to see just how important his prayers really are. God was working through his prayers to defeat the demonic forces that were behind this resistance.

It's a mystery, brothers. But the God whose purposes and promises shall never fail has nonetheless determined to carry out his purposes through the prayers of his people.

Our prayers are absolutely essential. Now, this is true in the big picture when we think of the advancement of the gospel. It's also true in the smaller arena. In respect to those people and individuals we pray for.

[42 : 55] Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4, 3-4. But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whom the God of this age has blinded.

Who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. The God of this world, working together with their own native depravity, has blinded their hearts.

It's a spiritual warfare. And how do we fight this warfare? For the souls of men. It requires spiritual weapons. Not guns and armies.

Political takeovers. Not theonomic agendas. No, Paul says, for though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God. For pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.

[43 : 54] Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And remember, the only kind of obedience to Christ that is acceptable to God is willing and glad obedience.

Gospel obedience. From the heart of a believer. And what are our weapons to bring this about? In the hearts of men. Well, very simply, the word and prayer.

Earnest, persistent prayer. You remember what Paul says in that great passage on spiritual warfare? Ephesians 6, 10 to 20.

He speaks of putting on the whole armor of God. And mentions all those pieces of armor. And then there's our weapon. What's our weapon? Our sword. The sword of the spirit. Which is the word of God.

And then there's one other weapon. That's given to us. He says, pray. Always. With all prayer and supplication in the spirit. Being watchful to this end.

[44 : 54] With all perseverance and supplication. These are the weapons that God has given to us in this great conflict. This is the very thing Daniel was doing. He was praying. With all prayer and supplication.

Being watchful to this end. With all perseverance and supplication. And this is what we must do. Our prayers accomplish, my dear brothers, more than we realize.

That's one of the lessons here in this text. Our prayers accomplish much more than we realize. Or will ever even know until the last day. And that leads me to the final lesson I want to underscore from this passage.

Secondly, we learn from this passage that we must be persistent. In our prayers. God hears us. As soon as we begin to pray.

If we are praying for those things he has promised. Or for those things that are consistent with his word. But he doesn't always answer immediately.

[45 : 56] Daniel's prayer was heard from the first day. He began to seek the Lord. But it was three weeks. Before the answer was given. Sometimes God gives his children.

Exactly what they ask. At the very time they ask it. We see that in chapter 9. It's interesting to read chapter 9. And he keeps emphasizing this. He says. Now while I was speaking. Praying.

And confessing. My sins. He goes on. Yes. While I was speaking. The man Gabriel. Being caused to fly swiftly.

Reached out to me. About the time of the evening. Offering. So. While he was speaking in prayer. The answer came. God answered him immediately. While he was praying. Well often. For his own wise reasons.

God delays the answer to our prayers. For a time. Sometimes for a long time. And there are a number of reasons. That God may do that. That we could talk about. But in our text here.

[46 : 50] Is one we don't often think about. God gives us a glimpse. Into the unseen. Spiritual world. And we learn. That prayer. Is spiritual warfare.

And that sometimes. It's Satan. Or evil spirits. Who are hindering. The answers. To those prayers. So what are we to do then? We must keep praying.

Don't stop. Don't doubt. That God hears you. Don't give up. Don't despair. And especially. I want to exhort you men.

To keep praying. For God's blessing. Upon your church. Upon our churches. Keep praying. For conversions. Keep praying. Keep praying.

For sinners. To be delivered. From the power of darkness. That's what happens. When a man is converted. He's delivered. From the power of darkness. The power of Satan. And he's translated. Into the kingdom.

[47 : 46] Of God's dear son. Keep praying. For this. Keep praying. For growth. Keep praying. For God's spirit. To be poured out. Upon you. And upon the ministries. That God has given to you.

If we don't pray. We're going to miss out. On what God is willing. And waiting to give. And also remember.

Sometimes when we pray. For something. The answer doesn't come. For a long time. You know. Sometimes when we think. We're working on God. In our prayer. Our praying. He's actually working on us.

And he's humbling us. And he's searching us. And he's conditioning us. And preparing us. To be able to receive. That which we are praying for. In such a way. That will not harm us.

Right. And sometimes. He doesn't answer. Directly. In exactly the way. We desired him to do so. But he gives us something better. I think about. When Martha sent for Jesus.

[48 : 44] To come. To heal her brother. Because he was about to die. And Jesus didn't go. He deliberately hung around. For a while. Before he made the trip. And by the time he got there. He was already dead.

Well. Jesus had something else in mind. That was going to bring more glory to him. Strengthen her faith even more. Than otherwise. He was going to raise him from the dead. Right. So sometimes.

God doesn't answer. Exactly the way we. We fought. But God does hear our prayers. And he does respond. To the prayers of God's people. That are shaped by.

The teaching of his word. And the promises. Of his word. We need to be confident of that. And keep praying. Persevere. Be persistent in prayer.

Remember what Jesus said. Ask. And it's in the present tense. Ask. Keep on asking. Knock. And keep on knocking. Seek. And keep on seeking. For those who ask.

[49 : 41] Receive. Those who seek. Shall find. And those who knock. The door. Shall be open unto you. You know.

There may be prayers. That we pray. That may not even be answered. In our lifetime. Maybe in the. The generation to come. Behind us.

In the 1650s. The great. Puritan preacher. John Flavel. Was preaching. One Sunday. In his church. In Dartmouth. England. There was a 15 year old boy. There.

Named Luke Short. He was in the congregation. At the end of the sermon. Flavel prayed. And he pleaded with God. That his blessing. Would be upon.

The message. That he preached. To the. To the soul. Of those who were there. To someone who was there. And. Soon afterwards. That teenager. Set sail from England. He immigrated to New England. In North America.

[50 : 39] And when Luke Short. Was 100 years old. 100 years old. All of the horrors. Of dying without Christ. Were strongly impressed.

Upon. Upon him. And he remembered. The effects. Of that sermon. He had heard. John Flavel. Preach. 85 years. Earlier. He had never been able. To completely.

Shake. Shake. Those impressions off. You know what happened? He got converted. The Lord saved him. Flavel didn't know. That his prayer.

Was going to be answered. So many years later. But it was. And we too. Must believe brothers. That delays. Are not. The same. As denials.

So let us. Keep praying. Keep praying. More than ever. Never stop praying. Trusting. That God hears us. And that through our prayers. Great things.

[51 : 36] Will be accomplished. For his. Glory. Well may God help us. This weekend. To learn. To pray.

Like Daniel. Amen. All right. Let's pray together. Father thank you for your word. Thank you for this beautiful passage. And. Full of mystery. And yet full of insight.

In which you pull back the veil. And give us a sight. Of things that. Are not seen. But are real. Lord help us to take all of this to heart.

Help us Lord. To learn to pray. Like Daniel. We ask it in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.