

DANIEL'S VISION OF A GREAT WAR

Daniel 10:1-21

Key Verse: 10:12

"Then he continued, 'Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.'"

Daniel is a man of faith. Daniel loved God more than anything else in the world. He remained faithful to God by keeping his identity as a believer in the Jehovah God Almighty and as a Jew. Daniel also did his best to keep himself holy before the holy God Almighty: When he was given the privilege to eat royal food and study in the royal academy of the Babylonian Empire--he resolved not to eat royal food and wine in order not to defile himself. This resolution came when he wanted to keep pure before the holy God Almighty. Daniel remained faithful to God to the end, even before the possibility of being thrown into the den of lions and lionesses (6:10). When we study Daniel's life of faith we discover that Daniel was most of all a man of prayer. In chapter 9, we learn that Daniel was a man of prayer: He prayed to God for God's mercy when he realized, through the study of the book of Jeremiah, that his people would be liberated from the captivity of the Babylonian Empire. In chapter 10, we see that Daniel prayed to God, fasting for 3 weeks. Why did he pray? Let's study why he prayed instead of celebrating the liberation. In this chapter we learn that prayer is an intensive spiritual battle between the saints and the Devil.

I. Daniel's three weeks' fasting prayer (1-12)

First, a message of a great war. It was in the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia. Chronologically, it had been three years since the people of Israel had been liberated from the Babylonian captivity. It was when Nehemiah and Ezra went to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and the Temple. But the work of restoration did not go smoothly. Daniel heard that many enemies were discouraging and hindering the rebuilding of the Jerusalem wall and the Temple. At the news Daniel was greatly distressed and his heart was overburdened. Until that time, Daniel was a man of political influence. But he did not depend on it. Daniel came to God in prayer to help his people complete the task of rebuilding the Jerusalem wall and the Temple. Humanly speaking, the situation which Daniel was in was too discouraging for Daniel to pray. Daniel could not pray. Daniel knew well how his people Israel had been so broken and despaired and dispirited. What was worse, the surrounding enemies who were out to hinder the task of rebuilding the Temple and the wall were strong and clever. To Israel, liberation from captivity was good, but the task of rebuilding the Jerusalem wall and the Temple, and settling down there,

overcoming threats of enemies, was too hard to cope with. But Daniel did not give up on the task. He came to God in prayer for help.

While he was praying a revelation was given to Daniel. It was a message concerning a great war. To Daniel, it was a totally unexpected message. The content of the message was that there would be "a great war" between the holy saints and the Devil. Daniel was stunned when he understood the meaning of the great war through a vision. Look at verse 2. "At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks." Humanly speaking, he was an unfortunate person. He lived as a POW throughout his lifetime and all his lifetime he prayed for the liberation of his people from Babylonian captivity. But liberation was one thing and obtaining true freedom from captivity to rebuild the Jerusalem wall and the Temple was quite another. They had to leave Babylon, where they could enjoy life security even as captives. They had to go back to desolate Israel and, with their bare hands, rebuild the Temple and the wall of Jerusalem. If the restoration of the Temple and the wall could be done with their human effort, smoothly without any hindrances, how happy they might have been! But there would be persistent hindrances, threats from enemies. Moreover, there would be the Devil's attack on his broken people. Allied forces of antichrists under the command of the Devil would be so severe that it would look like a great war. Without winning victories over the enemies and the Devil's scheme, they could not obtain God's blessing of liberation. Even though Daniel was a great man of faith, he was greatly alarmed by the vision of a great war. So he mourned for three weeks, not eating. Daniel's greatness lies in the fact that he prayed, and his prayer was like a fierce battle.

Second, the angel came to help Daniel. What happened when Daniel prayed? He found himself standing on the bank of the great Tigris river (4). When he prayed, he was brought up to the spiritual realm. Daniel looked up and there before him was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of finest gold around his waist. His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude (6). When we carefully observe verse 6, the man who came to Daniel was not God himself, but an angel. Daniel was fighting the spiritual battle in prayer for 21 days. He was exhausted, while the Devil's power was getting stronger. So God sent his angel to help him. There were several people with Daniel. They only heard a loud crashing sound. But they did not see the angel. Daniel was the only one who saw the angel in a vision. However, the vision was so overwhelming that the men with him fled and hid themselves. So Daniel was left alone, gazing at this great vision; but Daniel had no strength left and his face turned deathly pale and he was helpless. Daniel heard him speaking and as he listened to him, Daniel fell into a deep sleep, his face to the ground. A hand touched him and set him, trembling, on his hands and knees. The man said, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I

am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you." When he said this Daniel stood up trembling. The angel saw that Daniel was trembling. So the angel said, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard and I have come in response to them." (12) This verse indicates that Daniel's prayer to resolve not to eat the royal food not to defile himself was heard, and God helped him not to defile himself with royal food. This time also God heard his fasting prayer and sent his angel to help him.

In this part we learn that prayer is not daydreaming or meditation or making a tremendous imposition on God. It is a spiritual battle. Our most potent weapon is not political conspiracy, but our prayer. God heard Daniel's first prayer. God also heard Daniel's emergency prayer for the safe rebuilding of the Temple and the wall of Jerusalem. God sent his angel to help Daniel pray in his helplessness as a shepherd for his people. God heard his prayer and sent the Archangel, Michael, to help him and his people.

We see the example of the spiritual battle in prayer in Jesus. Jesus came to this world to save men from their sins. Jesus had to come to the place where the first man Adam was defeated by the Devil so that he could fight with the Devil and liberate mankind from slavery to sin. So, before launching into the messianic ministry, he had to fight with the Devil in the desert in a duel. Daniel fasted 21 days. But Jesus fasted for 40 days, and Jesus was hungry. Then the Devil came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." (Mat 4:3) It was a great temptation for Jesus, who had fasted for 40 days in the scorching desert, surrounded by limestone. The circumstance compelled Jesus to yield to the Devil's temptation to solve his hunger problem. But Jesus fought back against the Devil's temptation. Jesus said, "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Mat 4:4) This is a universal truth of mankind. Seventy years ago, communist leaders thought they would be happy if they had bread. Now they have bread. So they should be happy. But they say that they feel very miserable and tragic: They are tragic because they have no truth of God. The Devil tempted Jesus to take an easy way, not the way of the cross. Again the Devil tried to make Jesus stumble by making use of the word of God. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from the top of the temple and land on the ground unharmed. And people will recognize you as the Son of God." (Mat 4:6) Jesus defeated the Devil's temptations one by one with the word of Deuteronomy. The Devil defeated the first man, Adam. But he could not defeat Jesus. However, it was a great spiritual war for Jesus. When the great war was over, Jesus was so dehydrated and exhausted that he was helpless. Matthew 4:11b says, "Angels came and attended him." God wants us to win the spiritual war between the holy saints and the Devil. Of course, we know that we are helpless before the power of the Devil. But God helps us through

his angels.

II. The angel of God came and helped Daniel (13-21)

First, the Devil detained the angel. (13,14) Daniel was a man of prayer. He was distressed and overwhelmed by sorrow when he thought of his people's human situation. This part tells us that he was distressed, not because of his people's human situation, but because of the Devil. When Daniel began to pray and became helpless, God sent his angel to strengthen him. But his angel was detained 21 days by the Devil. Look at verse 13. "But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia."

This story is easy to understand when we think about the Gerasene Demoniac. When a young man wanted to enjoy his limitless human freedom and did not do his homework and indulged in sinful pleasure, 6,000 demons went into him one by one and made him forget who he was. Finally this young man began to cut himself with stones and lived among the tombs like a monster. He could not help himself because of demon-possession. Likewise, demons, the agents of the Devil, went into the Persian soldiers and let them spread the battle line and blocked the angel Michael's way when he was coming to Daniel to help him. When the Persian kingdom became evil, crushing and destroying and killing people of the world, immediately the Devil entered into her and made the empire the agent of the Devil.

These days most people ignore the existence of spiritual beings such as demons, the Devil or Satan. When they are tormented by demon-possession they want to pacify themselves by means of drugs or psychological counseling. We must know that technology is not everything. In other words, material abundance is not everything. Men need peace of soul, for men are composed of both soul and dust. So Paul said in Ephesians 6:12, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." We struggle, not because of our school study or human condition, but because of the powers of this dark world and because of the spiritual forces of evil in the spiritual world. We think we are only living in the material world. But in actuality we are living in both a material world and a spiritual world. Everybody wants to be a good husband. Many young men want to be holy saints like St. Augustine. But by the hindrance or detention of the Devil they cannot do as they had decided. How can we stop the Devil's roaring around to devour us? When we have the word of God and unceasing prayer. Especially when we have holy desire to live before the holy God, demons, agents of the Devil, cannot approach us, because they are like cockroaches who do not like the light or clean places.

Second, the angel of God came to help Daniel. (15-21) Daniel was a

great warrior of faith and a prayer servant. He feared no human being, not even the mighty King Nebuchadnezzar or Belshazzar. But before the intrigue of the Devil, he was totally helpless. He became sick until he could not speak. When the angel of God told him about the great war, Daniel was still very weak and helpless, not to mention able to engage in the battle against the forces of darkness of the world. So while the angel was delivering the message to him, Daniel fell prostrate and had trouble breathing (17). Then one who looked like a man touched his lips and Daniel opened his mouth and began to speak. When Daniel fought the spiritual battle and was exhausted, the angel of God came to help him and touched him and healed him. Then he could speak. Before he was helped by the angel, what he said was not encouraging, but something desperate. He said, "I am overcome with anguish because of the vision, my lord, and I am helpless. How can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe" (16b,17). Here we understand one young man's agony. He thinks he is a better shepherd than any other shepherd. The young man wants to be a missionary to somewhere, even China. But when he is alone in his apartment he is filled with human thinking and remorse. Then demons come into his heart one by one and line by line and troop by troop until he can hardly breathe. His problem is that he is a lip-service Christian with no commitment. He must repent his love of the world and decide to love God.

Once Paul had a plan to pioneer Asian countries because he knew that the Devil's stomping noise was loudest in Asian countries. But one day, when he was praying, he saw a vision of a man of Macedonia, standing and begging him to come to Macedonia to help them (Ac 16:9). Without question Paul followed the guidance of the Holy Spirit and came to Philippi, the gateway city to European countries. But nobody offered him a motel room to stay in. He went out to find a place where he could pray. By the riverside, he found a prayer place. When he finished praying, Paul was invited by a powerful woman, Lydia, who said, "Come and stay in my house." When Paul prayed and engaged in spiritual struggle against the Devil and was helpless, God sent his angel into the heart of Lydia to mother Paul.

What Daniel wanted was clear. He prayed that his people would be liberated. He prayed that his people would go back to the holy city Jerusalem and rebuild the temple and the wall. He prayed that his people would study the Bible and repent of their sins and grow spiritually. Daniel prayed that his people would be a priestly nation. As God hoped in his people, Daniel also hoped that all peoples of all nations would say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, to study the Bible from his people so that we may know God's ways." (Is 2:3) But when the people of Israel lived in the Babylonian Empire for 70 long years, they formulated a slave-mentality. There was no hope for them to rebuild the Temple and the wall of Jerusalem, not to mention become a priestly nation. It was very hard for Daniel to pray

for his broken people. When he prayed, fasting for 3 weeks, he only became sick and helpless. It was very hard for Daniel to pray, mainly because demons and the Devil spread full-fledged battle lines to hinder Daniel's prayer. To Daniel, prayer itself was a great spiritual war.

We must pray for our national leaders to be prayer servants like Daniel, and not to be like the agent of the Devil. We must fight the spiritual war not against our uncles, but against the Devil in prayer.