

Daniel 10:1–21 (ESV)

1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a word was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar. And the word was true, and it was a great conflict. And he understood the word and had understanding of the vision. **2** In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. **3** I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks. **4** On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris) **5** I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. **6** His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude. **7** And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision, but a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves. **8** So I was left alone and saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me. My radiant appearance was fearfully changed, and I retained no strength. **9** Then I heard the sound of his words, and as I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in deep sleep with my face to the ground. **10** And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. **11** And he said to me, “O Daniel, man greatly loved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you.” And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. **12** Then he said to me, “Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. **13** The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia, **14** and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come.” **15** When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and was mute. **16** And behold, one in the likeness of the children of man touched my lips. Then I opened my mouth and spoke. I said to him who stood before me, “O my lord, by reason of the vision pains have come upon me, and I retain no strength. **17** How can my lord’s servant talk with my lord? For now no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me.” **18** Again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me. **19** And he said, “O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage.” And as he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Let my lord speak, for you

have strengthened me.” 20 Then he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come. 21 But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth: there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince.

Believing the Angel’s message

Have you ever been frustrated with how hard the Christian life is? Have you ever read scriptures about all the things that Christ accomplished in our salvation and wonder to yourself why your life doesn’t always feel like those things are true. You read about a new heart, but you struggle with old heart issues. You read about victory but you experience defeat. And you wonder why? Am I really even a believer?

We are going to see some things this morning that I think will be encouraging. We will see a real struggle that goes on in the reality we **can** see that is driven by a reality that **we cannot**. I am not saying any of this to give us **excuses** for our failures. There really are none. But the Word of God is going to show us this morning that the struggle is **real** and it is **to be expected**.

1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a word was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar. And the word was true, and it was a great conflict. And he understood the word and had understanding of the vision.

This is one of those passages where understanding the historical context helps us to understand the meaning. In the first year of Cyrus the Israelites were given permission to return to Jerusalem. So some did. And they accomplished setting up enough in the temple so that they were able to offer sacrifices. But that was all. The city was not secure. It had no walls. And the temple was not rebuilt. Then persecution broke out and the Israelites had enemies on all sides.

Imagine yourself as one of the people returning to the promised land from Babylon. God’s **promises** are on **your side**. Jeremiah said that the Jews would return to their land. So they are probably expecting to go back to Jerusalem and have everything fall into place. After all, this is **God** they are serving. Can’t He do **anything**? Doesn’t He **want** all this work done? Well if so, shouldn’t He make it easy? These people might begin to think, maybe we have it all wrong. If God doesn’t make it easy, maybe we are wrong about what God wants. Or maybe there is no God at all.

Have you ever doubted God's sovereignty or God's goodness or God's love for you because He placed you in **very difficult circumstances**? Well that is the situation that the people of Israel are in in the third year of Cyrus. They did that which they thought God **wanted**, but God doesn't seem to be doing **His** part. This is WAY harder than they expected a spiritual obedience to be. There was far more **opposition** to the will of God than they envisioned. Obeying God was, well, frustratingly hard.

I want to encourage you and me from God's word this morning. Just because something does not come easy does not mean it is not God's will. Just because we need to pour **more effort into it** does not mean **God is not in it**. Just because your flesh and the devil and the world oppose your growth in Christ at every point does not mean you are outside of God's will. It is ok that it is hard. While Christ's yoke is easy, that does not mean the struggle against our enemies is easy. One of the great obstacles to our success in the Christian life is a **wrong expectation** about what a spiritual walk will be like. We are **ALWAYS** swimming upstream. There are **ALWAYS** forces intended by our enemy for our destruction. We need to expect it. We need to stop crying foul when doing what Christ said to do seems impossible to us. We need to have faith in **Christ** and in what **He says** and not in what we see and feel.

The temple in Jerusalem and the walls around the city **needed** to be rebuilt and they **would** be rebuilt. But the people doing the work were a little handicapped in their progress because they had to hold a sword in one hand and do masonry work with the other. Does your life ever feel that way? We do well to embrace this as the **will of God** instead of freaking out because it is so **very very hard**.

Now we are told in verse 1

a word was revealed to Daniel

I am not sure how to understand that. I am guessing it is the vision revealed in Chapter 11. But I am not sure. He received some message.

And the word was true, and it was a great conflict. And he understood the word and had understanding of the vision

Maybe this message was about the struggle that the returning Jews were facing in doing what they needed to do. It regarded a great conflict. And that is certainly what they were going to face. Whatever the case, Daniel understood the vision and it drove him to mourn and fast. It really looks like he was mourning the slow success of restoring Jerusalem. He knew it **should be** restored. But it was **not** being restored.

2 In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. 3 I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks. 4 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris)

So evidently the period that Daniel was mourning and fasting covered the feast of the unleavened bread but ended on the last day of the Passover feast. Daniel gave up luxury foods for 3 weeks. He did not eat meat. He did not drink wine. And he did not use lotions. That may have been quite a sacrifice living in the hot dry climate he was in.

How much is **our** worship to God worth to us? How often are we so absorbed with that which **God** cares about that we are driven to give up some of the blessings He has provided us with in order to become more absorbed with that which is central to **His** heart. That is what fasting is about. It is a **self denial** in an effort to focus on that which is **more important**. Daniel determined to do this thing in an effort to participate in the repentance over His people. He wanted to see God's will be done and it was more important to Him than enjoying those fleshly comforts he had become accustomed to.

It appears that fasting and caring about what God cares about are closely related. The more deeply we care about those things that trouble God, the more we allow those things to affect us. And the more they affect us, the less important our luxuries are. I don't like making that connection. But I don't think it can be avoided.

When is the last time you or I fasted because of our obsession with God's Holy will? Why is that? The first century church assumed that fasting was a normal part of their spiritual walk. How about us?

5 I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. 6 His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude. 7 And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision, but a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves. 8 So I was left alone and saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me. My radiant appearance was fearfully changed, and I retained no strength.

Ok so Daniel looks up and he sees someone that looks like a man. But this man was obviously **spiritually different** from a normal man. He looks, in ways, like Jesus is sometimes described. But angels sometimes have these kinds of

descriptions as well. In Ezekial, in particular, we see some very dramatic descriptions of angels.

The angel is most likely Gabriel, whom we have already met. I will refer to the angel as Gabriel. But keep in mind that I am not certain.

When we are dealing with spiritual things, we can't always make a lot of sense of them. Daniel alone could see the vision. But those around him were very aware that something spiritual was coming down. It scared them enough that they ran and hid like rabbits.

Sometimes I watch guys like Joel Osteen and Steven Furtig to see the extremes of unbiblical preaching. Often these guys speak in such a way that you would think Christ and them go fishing on the weekends together. But here we see Daniel, a guy a million times **more familiar** with **true spiritual revelations**. And Daniel has trouble holding it all together when he comes face to face, not with Christ, but with a mere angel. We really need to be careful to keep a proper balance with the boldness we can have to approach God's throne in prayer, and the understanding of how frightening this God we serve truly is. When we think we can get overly casual with the presence of God, we need to be very careful. God is three times Holy. The invitation to enter His presence with His favor is astounding. And fortunately we **do not have to experience** His frightening presence when we come before Him in prayer. But if God showed up in person, we would find ourselves **on our faces** with an experience of being in the presence of someone who **initiates fear in us** by His very existence. We do not have enough of that in our day. But look at all the men of God, men whose faith surpasses ours. And when they stand in front of an angel or Christ, they fall on their faces. To be God fearing is actually a very very good thing. If we live in a way that **we fear God properly**, we are living in a way that is very very wise. Daniel pretty much lost all his strength when he came before this angel. And the angel, in this case, did not portray himself in such a way that he would be confused for a human being. Sometimes they did. But not this time.

9 Then I heard the sound of his words, and as I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in deep sleep with my face to the ground. 10 And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.

Daniel seems to have passed out as soon as the Angel started to speak. But the angel (I assume) touched him and Daniel ended up on his hands and knees trembling.

11 And he said to me, “O Daniel, man greatly loved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you.” And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling.

I doubt that Daniel saw himself as a man greatly loved by God. I think we can assume this because the angel had to tell it to Daniel twice. You would think if this is how Daniel already saw himself, the angel would not have bothered to say it. I find great comfort in this. We are given the promises of God. We are given good theology. But sometimes we wonder, what about my failures? What about my shortcomings? I never give God all that He deserves. Is God really just **putting up with me**? Do I really have a relationship at all? But then we see in scripture that **every child of God** will be received by Christ with the statement, “Well done my good and faithful servant.” I wonder how many will be shocked to hear that statement? Will it be everyone? I want to be someone who IS a good and faithful servant. But there are so many failures. I suspect Daniel, although maybe a better example of faithfulness than we are, felt the same thing. “Gabriel. Are you sure you have the right guy? Are you sure I am the man greatly loved? But sure enough, Daniel was.”

I think it is really interesting that Daniel didn't just perk up and stand bold before the Angel. When a human encounters spiritual beings and receives direct spiritual information, it has a dramatic impact on him. It isn't something you just shake off. Daniel sure didn't. And those people who speak of spiritual things casually really might not know what they are talking about. Holiness is scary. When we are in the presence of holiness we find ourselves small and at a loss. That is consistent in scripture. If someone is flippant when they speak about God, there are attributes of God they may not be considering.

I am sure Daniel was impressed with the fact that Gabriel was sent to him by God. This is really important stuff Daniel was involved in. It was so important God sent Daniel some of his top end angels. There are very few people in the history of the world who have had such a status.

So Daniel mustered the strength to stand.

12 Then he said to me, “Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. 13 The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia,

This is one of those mysteries we see and we are left puzzled by. We are given a glimpse into the world of angels and demons, but we are not given many specifics.

Gabriel tells Daniel that three weeks ago when Daniel started praying Gabriel **purposed** to come visit Daniel. We can safely assume that this is what God wanted Gabriel to do. It was on that day he was given the assignment.

And notice it was Daniel's **words** that were heard. Never assume that the words of your prayers do not matter. These words in a human language triggered a response by God. The words were heard and caused an assignment to be made to Gabriel. But Gabriel could not break free.

I think this shows us some things about spiritual battle and about angels. The angels must be subject to some of the same limitations we are. They are subject to time. They are not omnipotent. They too must fight. They must struggle. And allow this to sink in. That struggle is God's will for the angel's lives. Surely God could stop the enemy from opposing Him and His angels. But He allows it for some purpose. It pleases God to allow the angels to experience some of the frustration **we feel** in the struggle against evil. Just consider this. Following God is not only hard **for us**. It is even hard **for the angels**. It even serves some purpose in **their lives**.

Most scholars think that the prince of the kingdom of Persia is probably a demonic being, maybe the devil himself. Others think that the **actual** human King of Persia was simply resisting what he knew he must do. And an angel had to stay there until **he did** what he must. I, personally think it was demonic. I think it was a demon in charge of that people group.

It looks like Gabriel was there alone doing battle with the prince of Persia. And he could not break away. But God sent **Michael** so that **Gabriel** could leave and meet with Daniel. There are a whole lot of things we do not understand about angels.

They face struggles like we do. They probably are not battling against the world and the flesh. They are struggling against the devil and his legions. But the struggle ends exactly **when** and **how** God wants it to. We do not understand God's timing. But we do understand the general concept of His sovereignty. He rules and the battle stops when God says it stops. We need never fear that the angels will lose and the devil will win.

14 and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come."

This is nice to know. Gabriel tells Daniel why he came. To make you understand what will happen to Daniel's people in the distant future. This is not so much for Daniel's sake as for the sake of those in the future.

15 When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and was mute. 16 And behold, one in the likeness of the children of man touched my lips. Then I opened my mouth and spoke. I said to him who stood before me, "O my lord, by reason of the vision pains have come upon me, and I retain no strength. 17 How can my lord's servant talk with my lord? For now no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me." 18 Again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me.

Daniel was rendered speechless by this angel and his message to Daniel. He is barely functioning. The angel has to keep intervening to keep Daniel in the conversation. He has a dual problem. Both **talking to Angels** is hard, and **hearing the vision** is hard. It seems to have taken his breath away.

Have you ever received news that left you speechless and breathless? I would guess that it was not good news.

Daniel needed help and the angel provided it.

Now look what the angel says again.

19 And he said, "O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage."

Have you ever heard news that unsettled you? Maybe it was something about a loved one. Maybe it was a bad report regarding sickness. Maybe it was news regarding a life situation you are about to experience. There are so many devastating things that can go wrong. And what are we tempted to conclude when those things happen.

1- I am not loved by God.

2- I have reason to fear.

3- I cannot possibly have peace in this situation.

4- It is impossible to be strong and courageous with how bad this situation is.

All those ideas have one thing in common. They are all lies. Our seemers are broke broke broke. We cannot believe what they tell us without testing what they tell us against God's word.

Let's look at them.

I am not loved by God.

Scripture tells us that every believer, no matter what their **current circumstance**, is loved by God and nothing can separate them from the love of God.

I have reason to fear.

Scripture instructs us time after time to not give way to a **position of fear**. “**Fear not**” is a frequent command in scripture. And Jesus tells us how to think right about fear. Change your prospective and think about that which there is **most reason to fear**. God can throw you into hell. Fear Him and kiss the Son while you can. If you reconcile with the Son, you have no reason to fear God’s judgment or God’s enemies.

I cannot possibly have peace in this situation.

As for peace, peace is reasonable, even in the face of fearful situations. **John 14:26,27** says this- **26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.**

Jesus said this right before He was betrayed by Judas and delivered to the cross, carrying all our sins. What trial do you have in your life that is **worse than that one**. If He could face the cross without fear, there is reason to believe that fear is not appropriate in our situation either.

It is impossible to be strong and courageous with how bad this situation is.

Paul was talking about death in the context of the next statement.

2 Cor 5: 6-8 6 So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Paul, as always, was laying out good reason for having courage. Courage is based on a logical argument. You and I have reason to have **courage** in the face of **fear-inciting** situations in our lives.

If at any time as Christians our reason drives us to think that we are being smart to be afraid or to worry or to be peaceless or to be cowardly or to believe, based on our situation, that God is not loving or that God does not love us, one thing is for sure. We are **not** being smart. We are being **faithless**. We are trusting in our own understanding in the worst kind of way. Scripture addresses how to correct that thinking. It may take a great deal of time and effort, maybe a lifetime, but we can learn how to think differently.

Prov 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

**7 Be not wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.**

**8 It will be healing to your flesh
and refreshment to your bones.**

So the angel exhorted Daniel to avoid all the natural responses he might have to this vision that was delivered by an angel. And what was the result?

And as he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me."

The Lord provided the strength that **Daniel needed** as Daniel **submitted** himself to the Lord's messenger. We might not see how we can be fearless and courageous, but God can provide us with what we need in the situation if we will just trust **Him** and **His word**.

20 Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come.

I think we can assume Daniel knew the answer to the angel's question since the angel already answered it. Gabriel was there to help Daniel understand the long term plight and future of God's people.

Then he tells Daniel he needs to get back to the fight he was in. And he mentions that the prince of Greece will somehow get involved. We really don't know what to do with that information. I think it reveals how this verse is true.

Eph 6: 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

We don't know everything that is going on behind the scenes. We will talk next week about keeping it all in the proper perspective. But it is important to know that the headlines in the news will never reveal the true struggle. It will not tell you about Demons and Angels engaged in conflict. It will not tell you of the true nature of evil. It will not tell you what God's plan is for using the world stage as it is. You will only see the aftermath, the consequences of it.

21 But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth: there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince.

Frankly I have no idea what this is supposed to teach us. Somehow 2 angels are accomplishing something very difficult. It is framed in conflict. Only Michael and Gabriel are fighting against the Prince of Persia and possibly the Prince of Greece. Are they demons assigned to countries? We do not know. We only know that

God assigned angels to do this warfare. And we should be encouraged because God always knows what He is doing. They are doing warfare that we are not equipped to do. God will see to it that the battles we cannot fight be fought by those who can, so we can win the battles that we are to fight.

As for applications this week, maybe a good application would be for us to spend some times asking to what degree we believe or do not believe what the angel said to Daniel.

**19 he said,
O man greatly loved,
fear not,
peace be with you;
be strong and of good courage.**