

Daniel 10

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Preacher: Matt Coburn

[0 : 00] Well, good morning.

So I was preparing for my message this week. I was thinking about some of the appointments that I've had over the last couple of weeks. As I've seen some of you come in and sit in my office and share with me the battles of your life.

I've heard some of you share as your heart pours out the pain, the heartache, the confusion, and the weariness.

Of your lives. You've confessed to me that there are times you feel like you have no strength to go on. There are times when you have wondered aloud why it has to be so hard.

And you wonder where does help come from? Where can I look for help in the middle of my life that feels daily like a battle for life and not death?

[1 : 33] For good and not evil? Battles without and battles within. And where is the help? And how do we, where do we turn in those moments?

It's in light of that question that we're going to dive into our chapter today. We're continuing in our series in Daniel. The book of Daniel, you can turn there in your pew Bible. We're going to be looking at Daniel 10, page 748.

But as you turn there, I want to say this. I think Daniel would understand. As we come to chapter 10, Daniel is near the end of his life.

He has been in exile for 70 years or so. It was 70 years ago when he as a teenager was taken away from his homeland and brought into the capital city of Babylon.

And as we've read, he's seen remarkable things. He's seen God deliver him. He's seen kings change and come and go. He's seen even kingdoms rise and fall as the Babylonian Empire fell and the Persian Empire rose with Cyrus.

[2 : 45] And yet, I think he would understand. For his life has always been as an exile and as a slave.

His life has always been hard. And certainly, as we see in this chapter, there are days when his strength completely failed him. It probably was even more profound for him than it might be for some of you who are younger and maybe have lived a few fewer years of life.

Because he has lived this for 70 years. And now, he's on the brink of hopefully seeing something happen. If you remember the history, the Babylonian Empire came to an end at 539.

Cyrus rose to power. And Cyrus gave this decree that you can read about in 2 Chronicles 36 that allowed the people of God who were in exile to go back to their homeland.

To rebuild their city, Jerusalem, and their temple. To worship their God. And in this great decree, there was great hope.

[4 : 00] Suddenly, the hardness will end. Suddenly, the battle will end. Suddenly, we'll have peace and a restoration. And yet, if you've been here for the last couple of weeks, you know that what we've seen instead is that in the midst of all of that hope, Daniel has also been reminded by visions over and over again that it actually won't be easy.

That in the short term, it will be harder. And that the battles will be fiercer. And that his life will be harder than he even imagined.

We see as we look into this chapter in the first verse, we see that Daniel has a vision. But he has a vision not of peace and prosperity. Not of the lion laying down with the lamb and a land flowing with milk and honey.

No, he has a vision. But it is a vision of great conflict. And he, I think, would ask the same question. Where do I find the strength to go on? Why does it have to be so hard? Where does my help come from? I think that Daniel will give us some hope in answering these questions today.

[5 : 20] We'll see that in this section, Daniel is, in this section from chapter 10 through 12, this is the last part of the book.

It's one episode in three parts. Greg, next week, is going to talk about the content of the vision of great conflict. And he'll talk about the kings of the north and the south and all sorts of fun things, which he will do great with.

So we're looking forward to that. But what we do see is that this is the last episode. And we see that God gives us a unique perspective into the battle that Daniel fought and that we fight in our lives as well.

How the Lord will meet him. And how the Lord will strengthen him. So let's look at Daniel chapter 10. We're going to read it together. And then we're going to pray and we'll continue.

In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, a word was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belshazzar. And the word was true and it was a great conflict.

[6 : 34] And he understood the word and he had understanding of the vision. In those days, I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all for the full three weeks.

On the 24th day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river that is the Tigris, I lifted up my eyes and looked. And behold, a man clothed in linen with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz came up around his waist.

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 voice was like the sound 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 trembling fell upon them and they fled to hide themselves.

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.

[7 : 53] 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. And behold, a hand touched me and sent me trembling on my hands and knees.

And he said to me, oh, 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. Then he said to me, fear not, Daniel, for from this 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.

The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me 21 days. But Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me for I was left there with the kings of Persia 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. When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and was mute. And behold, one in the likeness of the children of men touched my lips.

[9 : 11] Then I opened my mouth and I spoke. I said to him who stood before me, oh, my Lord, by reason of this vision, pains have come upon me and I retain no strength.

How can my Lord's servant talk with my Lord? For now no strength remains in me and no breath is left in me. Again, one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me.

And he said, oh, 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 I said, and said, let my Lord speak for you have strengthened me. And 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. But I tell you, 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.

[10 : 14] And as for me in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him. Did you get all that? Let's pray.

Lord, thank you for this passage. Thank you for your word that you have given to us to reveal to us you and your world and your kingdom. Lord, help us as we seek to understand what you have to say to us this morning through this passage.

Lord, open our eyes that we might see, Lord, the unseen reality of the spiritual world. Open our hearts that we might believe and hope in you as the one who rules over all.

And Lord, may we find in the midst of this passage strength to carry on. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So this is not a normal story.

But I think that, in fact, it is a gift to us. Because I think that in it, God helps us see things that we don't often get to see very clearly.

[11 : 22] And that we often don't talk about in our modern world. We're going to see two things in this passage this morning. The first is that the battle that we are in is greater than we think.

And the second thing we're going to see is that the help that we have is greater than we hope. So the battle is greater, but the hope is also greater.

So first of all, let's just think through what this passage has to tell us about the battle that we are in. And it feels like what happens in this passage is that Daniel pulls back the curtain.

Or God meets Daniel and pulls back the curtain for Daniel. And he's just passing it along to us.

About what is going on in the world in a very profound way.

Specifically, what he's pulling back and helping us see is that the spiritual reality in our world, just as much as the physical reality or the material reality of our world, both of these things are at play in our lives and in the very conflicts and the battles that we are facing every day.

[12 : 35] Now, Daniel was not ignorant of this. You see this in the opening couple of verses, starting in verse 2, because he was fasting and praying. He was already engaging in a battle for his people.

Because the return from exile had begun. The remnant had started to go back to Jerusalem. And they had found it hard. And it seems to me that what Daniel was praying for is for help for his people.

It might have been a help in light of his recognition of their sin, like the prayer in chapter 9 that Nick preached on last week. It might have been a prayer because Daniel knew that the return to exile wasn't going to be all peaches and roses, but it was going to be a hard road full of battle.

And so he was praying for them for that. It might be that he was praying because though Persia had delivered God's people from the rule of the Babylonians, they had replaced the Babylonians as a ruling power over his people.

And God's people continued to be under another rule in this physical world. We don't know exactly why Daniel was fasting and praying, but he was already engaging in this spiritual, in this intersection between the spiritual and the physical realm.

[14 : 03] But we see far more clearly in this chapter than many places in Scripture as God meets Daniel and pulls back that curtain.

So he meets Daniel. In the midst of this fasting, he meets Daniel first of all in a vision. He has a vision of this man coming. It's a vision of a strong warrior.

All of these images have to do with strength and power and judgment. And it's a vision of a strong warrior.

And then you see further on as you keep going that this warrior or perhaps another, it's not completely clear whether we have one person, two people, or maybe even three people who meet with Daniel.

But they're all heavenly beings and they all have the same function in his life. We see in 13 and 14, again, that there is a vision of, or that there is a message that comes along with this vision.

[15 : 09] This vision is not just something in Daniel's head, but there's suddenly someone there and they're speaking real words to him. They're actually physically touching him. And these heavenly beings are recounting what's going on in the spiritual realm.

That there's a battle. That there are these powers at war. There's a battle between the power of those on God's side and what he describes the princes of Persia and Greece, or the kings of Persia and Greece.

We see this in 13 and 14 and in verse 20 and following. We see that Michael is called your prince, meaning that in some way he was particularly protecting Daniel and God's people.

We see that this battle is a fierce one where even angelic beings fighting on behalf of the Almighty need help. And so Michael helped this other person who may have been Gabriel, if you go back to chapter 9.

That might be him, but we don't know. But that similarly you see in 11.1 that this one who is talking to Daniel went and helped Michael, it seems.

[16:33] And that's what chapter 11 verse 1 is about. That he stood with Michael in the transition of power from the Babylonians to the Persians. This is kind of heady stuff.

I'm sure you don't think about this on a daily basis. But we shouldn't be surprised by this. The Bible actually, if we read it with the eyes to see it, reminds us over and over and over and over again that in fact this is true, that the physical and the spiritual realities are both at work all the time.

Think of Elisha and his servant when the king of Syria came against the king of Judah. Elisha when they were surrounded and had no hope and no army, Elisha prayed and said, God, open my servant's eyes because he was afraid.

And in 2 Kings 6 we see the story of how God opened his eyes and he saw that in fact there was a whole host of heavenly warriors ready to fight for God's people and to deliver them from that very physical army on the other side.

We see the same thing when Snakarib brings his Assyrian army to the very gates of Jerusalem ready to sack the capital of God's people and take the holy city.

[18:03] And we see in 2 Chronicles 32 that Hezekiah cries out to the Lord and the Lord sends an angel and suddenly the entire encircling army is gone.

They turn back and they forsake the battlefield even though they had the upper hand and all the power in the world. The spiritual forces influence the physical geopolitical reality in those moments. Jesus reminds us of this in the Garden of Gethsemane when Peter pulls out his sword to defend him against the ones who had come to arrest him. And Jesus looks at him and says don't you know I have legions of angels I could snap my fingers and they would be here to deliver us but that's not the way that we're going to play this out because that's not what God is doing right now.

But don't you know I could be delivered in an instant. We see it in the letters over and over again maybe one of the most profound ones is in 1 Peter 5 verse 8.

Peter is writing to a group of Christians who are being persecuted within the context of the Roman Empire. Their persecution is real it is physical it is political and it is harsh.

[19:32] Describes it as a fiery trial. And yet Peter reminds them that they have an adversary the devil who prowls around like a roaring lion seeking to devour.

And so we see throughout scripture that this picture that is being unveiled for us in the book of Daniel chapter 10 that this is actually an ongoing reality.

Let me take a side note for just a minute. There are some who have taken this picture of the intersection between spiritual and political or physical powers and made it a very specific ministry strategy and a very specific plan.

They have called it spiritual mapping and identifying territorial powers. and friends I'll tell you that I think that there's not enough evidence in this chapter or in other parts of scripture to justify it with the kind of specificity that it is presented by some.

There are some who think the only way that renewal revival or the kingdom of God will ever come is if we engage with specific knowledge about the specific spiritual powers that are oppressing specific places to set them free and that's the only way that we are going to do it.

[21:03] They identify this with the rulers the authorities and the cosmic powers of this present darkness in Ephesians 6 and say we need to identify them and overcome them by prayer.

Friends, let me say this. There may be some truth in it. I have lived in places where it seems that there are particular spiritual battles that people fight over and over and over again.

New people who come in old people who have lived there for a long time they fight the same spiritual battles. So I don't want to discount it as being completely wacky or crazy because I don't think that it is at one level and yet I also think that we must not see that this is the strategy the missing strategy that's going to bring in God's kingdom.

If it were God could have been far clearer in his word to help us know how to fight this battle. It may be helpful for us to pray about the spiritual influences and dynamics of the place that we live or the people that we're praying for but do you see that even when in a place like this where God was almost as clear as he could be about that possibility he didn't give a prescription Daniel therefore you need to fight the battle against Persia by praying in these particular ways against this demon. That's actually not what the passage says. The passage says there is a battle in the spiritual realm. It is real. you engage with it by prayer but you're not the one actually ultimately fighting that battle

are you?

[22 : 52] It is not up to you or to me to bring in the kingdom by how we do this because ultimately the witness of scripture is that it's God who triumphs over those powers and principalities.

In Colossians 2 and in 1 Peter 3 it is explicit that it is Christ and through his death and resurrection and his exaltation that he is now seated at the right hand of God and he has disarmed those rulers and powers and principalities.

It is he who has done it not us. That's my little excursus on that. Let's go back to the passage.

Think about how about you? How about you? Have you ever seen or experienced a time where God's pulled back the curtain and you've seen some kind of divine intervention that doesn't seem to have any physical reason or rationale?

I was thinking about back in 1987 I was a new Christian. I was on a missions trip to India. We had flown in to Delhi and had a tight series of connections to be able to get to the place that we were going in the middle of the country and arrived and the plane was gone.

[24 : 17] Cancelled. And if you've ever been in these situations you realize that you have no ability to engage with that helpfully.

You are outside of your language you are outside of your culture you have it's 11 o'clock at night you're bleary from a 14 hour plane ride and you're thinking what in the world and how do I do this? So our team sat down and we prayed God help us. And then our leader went and got in some line that he thought might be the right line to get some sort of information about how possibly to find a rebooked flight somewhere at some point and thinking about all the dominoes that needed to be reshuffled because of it.

And behind him a man named George came up. And George became our guide through that process.

He was a local, he was a Christian, but we wonder if he was also an angel. Again, I don't know.

[25 : 26] I have no idea. But it sure felt like God came to our aid in a very supernatural way, in a way that we could have no control over and has no reason to expect except that God intervened into our lives.

How about you? Do you believe that your reality includes unseen spiritual forces at work? Do you think there's a connection between what goes on in your material physical world every day and the spiritual life?

C.S. Lewis, in the opening of his great book, *The Screwtape Letters*, says this, there are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils.

One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.

Some of us may fall into the danger of seeing a demon behind every parking ticket and be constantly casting out demons from your broken down jalopy, your difficult workplace relationships, or your disobedient child.

[26 : 49] my guess is, here at Trinity, more of us would fall on the other side.

Though we would never deny it in our formal theology, we practically live as if the only reality in our world is the material and the natural one, the measurable and the visible one.

And just to make sure we balance this right, we know that there are three enemies of our soul in the world, right? The world, the flesh, and the devil. The world, meaning the world in rebellion, the patterns of the cultures and societies that we live in and the way that they lead us away from faith and trust in God.

The flesh, the sinful nature that when we are apart from Christ, we are enslaved to and have no power over, and even when we are in Christ, how it continues to cling and to seek to exert its influence in our lives away from godliness and worship and love and trusting faith and persevering faith, and instead exerting itself in selfishness, in self-dependence, in disbelief.

So we have the world and the flesh, but we also have the devil. that there are spiritual forces that are seeking to trip us up, that are seeking to push our buttons, that are seeking to influence us away from godly living and from a knowledge of Christ.

[28 : 32] What we're being encouraged to today is to see how real that is. Now look, we can't blame our sin on the devil, and we can't excuse the sin in our world by saying, well, that's what the devil does.

We are meant to fight those battles and to be responsible for our own lives, and yet, we must recognize that there is this spiritual battle that is real, and there are spiritual forces that seek to influence us.

Let me try to unpack this a little more for you so you can think about it. In your workplace, you have a boss who's taken a dislike to you, and despite every effort to work hard, every effort to understand his expectations and to fulfill them, every initiative to address unknown offenses, you've done every human thing you can to repair this relationship.

Have you ever considered that there may be a spiritual force at work seeking to poison your workplace and your relationship? How about your last fight with your spouse?

Yes, you were both tired and stressed, of course. Yes, it was the hundredth time you've talked about that thing, a hundredth time you failed to address it well.

[29 : 59] And even though you both wanted to be different, you find yourselves acting in ways that you hate. And even in the moment where you know you want to turn and be gracious towards one another, you end up attacking.

Has it ever occurred to you that there's a spiritual influence in that interaction that you need to be aware of, that you need to know about?

Parents, children, you've tried to be patient with one another and to be gracious. You've tried to respect boundaries, to follow through on discipline as parents.

You've tried to trust and obey as a child. You've tried to build closeness and yet it feels like there's this impenetrable distance. Some might call it teenagerdom, but others would see it as a real problem, a real distance and distrust, even anger or hatred.

You don't understand where it's coming from. You go through the list. Is it new friends at school? Is it puberty? Is it that we were bad parents?

[31 : 27] You wrestle through all of these things. Maybe can you acknowledge that there's a spiritual aspect to that as well? That there's a battle.

That there are those who, that there are spiritual forces that are whispering lies, that are pushing ungodly agendas, that are fueling ungodly emotions in all of these things.

Friends, let us recognize that even today in our political climate, in the midst of real disagreement, and in the midst of real issues that need to be addressed well, can we not see that violence and hatred and fear are the very things that the enemy of our soul take gleeful joy in?

That these things, that there may be spiritual forces at work driving our country, yes, even our church, away from the kind of godly living as compassionate and righteous human beings in this world.

That we may be tempted to fall into attitudes and actions that compromise the very gospel of grace that God has called us to believe and to proclaim.

[33 : 02] Let us not be unaware, brothers and sisters, let us not be unaware of these things.

Daniel 10 wants to remind us that the battle is fierce and the battle is real and it's not just physical and social and sociopolitical and geopolitical but it is spiritual as well.

but the good news is this passage tells us not only is that true, not only are we to see our lives through this lens of this integrated vision of reality where spiritual and physical are not separate but are actually overlapping and intertwined but we see that the help and the hope that we have is greater as well because of that.

Because look at what happens to Daniel in the midst of this passage where he is clearly weary, worn out. How many times as I read through does he say my strength failed me when he fell down into a deep sleep because he was so overwhelmed, when he turned his face to the ground and was mute, all of these things.

What did God do? God sent him. God sent him his messengers. His people, his, these spiritual beings to come and what did they do over and over again?

[34 : 37] They reminded Daniel that he was not alone. They reminded Daniel that there were others fighting for him. They reminded Daniel that in God and with God's people there can be strength strength given, strength found for us to stand and to not fall, to continue to in our, in our battle to find that there is a help and a hope for us that is good.

Just run back through the passage with me. Look at verse 10. As he has fallen, prostrate, because of this vision, the angel touches him and gets him to his hands and knees.

Isn't it encouraging that it doesn't all happen at once? Because that's how we feel, right? We get touched when we feel God's presence helping us. We sometimes think, well, why can't it just be easy and have it be overcome?

But instead, Daniel gives us a very realistic picture. No, that help was simply to get up off the ground onto his hands and knees, trembling. And then verse 11, the touch came first, then the words, stand and be strong.

And these words strengthened him, so he stood up, yet still trembling. And that trembling may have just been, it's consistent throughout scripture that whenever we encounter heavenly beings, we fall on our faces and we're afraid.

[36 : 12] It's the only thing that angels seem to say, don't be afraid. afraid. And he has to say it all the time because of course, every time we see one, we're afraid. But having said, don't be afraid.

He touches him to remind them, you are not alone. And then the words that he speaks, look in verse 11. Oh man of God, you are greatly loved.

Isn't this an interesting thing? He didn't come and exhort him, Daniel, buck up. Pull up your bootstraps. You can do this. What does he say?

He says, you are dearly loved. Have you ever thought about that? That the greatest power that we have in the battle, in these spiritual battles, is to know that there is a loving God who is fighting for us and who is with us.

That he has set his love on us. What an incredible thing. Not only does God remind him that he is deeply loved, but he's also, in verse 12, he says, you've not been ignored.

[37 : 28] Your prayers have been heard. Your cries for help have been heard. Isn't that encouraging when we feel in the midst of those times when we just think, God, how can we ever keep going?

where I don't have the strength to keep going, to know that God hears our cries. And in verse 19, he expands the words even more.

Fear not. Peace be with you. And here he does say it. Be strong and of good courage. And he goes on to explain why. Not, I'm going to give you the victory.

Not, these troubles are going to go away. not, why you're so afraid. If you weren't so afraid, this wouldn't be such a problem. But he goes on to say, be strong and of good courage because I have been fighting for you and I will continue to be fighting for you.

What a remarkable thing that God sends this kind of help. Heavenly beings to come to meet with Daniel, to touch him, to speak words to him so that he may be helped in his time of trouble.

[38 : 50] How encouraging it might be for us similarly if we remember how God has sent the greatest spiritual being to us who says things like, behold, I am with you to the ends of the age.

Who says to us, I will never leave you or forsake you. Whose servants write reminding us that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ for his people.

The one who said to his disciples even while he walked the earth, I have said these things to you that you might have peace. In this world you will have tribulation.

but take heart. I have overcome the world. Friends, this is the good news of the gospel for us in the midst of the spiritual battle that we fight.

And this is a remarkable thing because at the end of the day it's not our battle. Oh, we are to engage in it. We see in Ephesians that we are to engage in it but how do we engage in it?

[40 : 01] We are to take hold of all that God has done for us in Christ. Putting on the armor is simply to believe and entrust in the grace of God, the truth of God, the righteousness of God that is expressed most fully in Christ.

For friends, we know that it is Christ who ultimately has won the victory. When he came, when he left heaven and came to earth, it was God's greatest divine messenger, God's greatest divine being because it was his very self coming and taking on human form and invading this world and as he went to the cross, the greatest battle that has ever been fought in the spiritual realms and in our world was fought and Jesus defeated sin and death by, not by conquering and raising an army to sweep over the powers of the enemy, but by offering up his very own life.

He achieved victory by loving self-sacrifice and having risen from the dead, he defeated sin and death and indeed the power of the devil himself.

And friends, we know, we know this, right? This battle is not over. You know the analogy, we are between in the spiritual realms, in the sweep of human history, we are between D-Day when the

