

Daniel 8

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[0 : 01] Turn with me in your Bible to Daniel chapter 8, wonderful hymn of assurance, and that's actually where the book of Daniel is going to get to in chapter 12, is the promise of resurrection.

We won't see that explicitly in today's passage, but that's the hope that the book is leading up to. Daniel chapter 8, page 745 in a pew Bible.

We'll read the whole chapter together. In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar, a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first.

And I saw in the vision, and when I saw, I was in Susa, the citadel, which is in the province of Elam. And I saw in the vision, and I was at the Ulai Canal. I raised my eyes and saw, and behold, a ram standing on the bank of the canal.

It had two horns, and both horns were high, but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. I saw the ram charging westward and northward and southward. No beast could stand before him, and there was no one who could rescue from his power.

[1 : 18] He did as he pleased and became great. As I was considering, behold, a male goat came from the west across the face of the whole earth without touching the ground, and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes.

He came to the ram with the two horns, which I had seen standing on the bank of the canal, and he ran at him in his powerful wrath. I saw him come close to the ram, and he was enraged against him and struck the ram and broke his two horns, and the ram had no power to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled on him, and there was no one who could rescue the ram from his power.

Then the goat became exceedingly great, but when he was strong, the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.

Out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land. It grew great even to the host of heaven, and some of the host and some of the stars it threw down to the ground and trampled on them.

It became great, even as great as the prince of the host. And the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown, and a host will be given over to it together with the regular burnt offering because of transgression, and it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper.

[2 : 43] Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to the one who spoke, For how long is the vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled underfoot?

And he said to me, For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state. When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it.

And behold, there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, and it called Gabriel, Make this man understand the vision.

So he came near where I stood. And when he came, I was frightened and fell on my face, but he said to me, Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end. And when he had spoken to me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face to the ground, but he touched me and made me stand up.

He said, Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation, for it refers to the appointed time of the end. As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia, and the goat is the king of Greece.

[3 : 57] And the great horn between his eyes is the first king. As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power.

And at the latter end of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their limit, a king of bold face, one who understands riddles, shall arise. His power shall be great, but not by his own power.

And he shall cause fearful destruction, and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints. By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall become great.

Without warning he shall destroy many, and he shall even rise up against the prince of princes, and he shall be broken, but by no human hand. The vision of the evenings and the mornings that has been told is true, but seal up the vision, for it refers to many days from now.

And I, Daniel, was overcome, and lay sick for some days. Then I rose and went about the king's business, but I was appalled by the vision, and did not understand it.

[5 : 07] How do you deal with disappointment? Last Saturday I was talking with a few guys at the men's breakfast. We were talking about how we can encourage one another, and build each other up, and we were talking about why do we need encouragement as Christians.

And it struck me as we were talking that, especially the longer you live on this earth, the more that we face disappointment. Now, disappointment can take a variety of forms.

Sometimes it involves losing loved ones, or ending relationships. Sometimes it involves remaining in a relationship, a marriage, or a friendship, or a family relationship, but knowing that right now it's not what you hoped it would be, and it doesn't seem to be getting fixed soon.

Maybe you feel like your career path has hit a dead end. You're stuck in a job you don't like with a boss who doesn't like you. Maybe you've seen the inside of ugly church conflicts, or moral failures of church leadership.

Maybe you're disillusioned with our national political scene, and the way our culture seems to be trending. How do we deal with disappointment without losing hope, and without latching on to false hopes?

[6 : 24] Because false hopes only increase our sense of despair when they don't come to pass. I think this is one of the questions that our passage today is addressing.

And what we'll see in this passage is that God is shaping his people's expectations for the future, preparing them to face some very trying and difficult circumstances, but at the same time reassuring them that he's still on the throne, and he's going to triumph in the end.

Now, we've been going through the book of Daniel. We've finished chapters 2 through 7. If you remember, that's the central section of the book that was written in Aramaic, the international trade language of the Persian Empire.

That section had a broader view. It was sort of addressed to the whole world, introducing the world to the one true God who rescues, reveals, and rules.

But at the beginning of chapter 8, the language shifts back to Hebrew. The local language of Judah and Jerusalem. And the focus of the rest of the book shifts to the particular concerns of the exiled people of God at the time.

[7 : 36] They were asking questions like these. Will God bring us back home to the land that he promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Will God provide for the rebuilding of his house, the temple in Jerusalem, his city?

Will our nation exiled and scattered because of sin be gathered together under God once again? And the answer that God gives in these chapters, chapters 8 through 12, is on the one hand very hopeful, and on the other hand very sobering.

On the one hand, he says, yes, I will bring you home, just as I promised in Jeremiah 29.

Yes, the temple and the city will be rebuilt. Verse 11 through 14 of this chapter only makes sense if there is a temple in Jerusalem. And yes, I will gather you together as my people once again.

On the other hand, the answer God gives here is very sobering. The world will continue to be dominated by beastly empires and arrogant rulers who do not acknowledge God.

[8 : 48] Some of these rulers will specifically persecute God's people and profane God's temple. Even after you get back home, you will face great suffering and prolonged opposition.

The road ahead is not going to be smooth or easy. This is what Daniel is saying, what God's saying to his people through this vision of Daniel.

He's giving them a hopeful message, but he's also giving them a very sobering and realistic picture of the future. Now, if you think back to the beginning of Daniel, the people of Israel had just been taken into exile.

They were brought away from their land, put in the middle of enemy territory. And many of them in that kind of situation could have been tempted to despair and just give up hope and just decide to abandon their identity as the people of the one true God.

Perhaps they could have thought, we've just blown it. God's given us over to our enemies. He's done with us. He's going to wipe us out. But if you look at what God says to them at the beginning of the exile, in passages like Jeremiah 29 or even the first four chapters of Daniel, it's a message of encouragement.

[10 : 06] And God says, I'm right here with you. God gives Daniel and his friends wisdom and understanding and favor, even with the king of Babylon. God says, yes, you've been exiled because of your sin, but don't despair.

Don't think that everything's just going downhill from here. Don't think that there's no hope, that it's no good trying anymore at all. I'm with you. There's hope in the midst of your exile.

But here in chapter eight, the time of their exile was coming to an end. And within only a few years, large numbers of Israelites would be heading back to Jerusalem and beginning to resettle the land and rebuild the city of Jerusalem and eventually rebuild the temple.

And in that situation, many of them could have been vulnerable to embrace false hopes or unrealistic expectations that the future would now be easy and smooth.

And so God's preparing his people for the reality that it's going to be more complicated than that. There's a bumpy road ahead. And there's a long road ahead. So this brings us to the vision of chapter eight.

[11 : 20] Now, this is the third of four major prophetic visions in the book of Daniel. I've included a bulletin insert to help you see a little bit about how some of these visions fit together.

So on this side, you can see the visions of chapter two and chapter seven, right? At the beginning and the end of the Aramaic section, they correspond to each other. They both have four successive kingdoms followed by the everlasting kingdom of God.

I've listed two of the most common ways that scholars have connected the four kingdoms of Daniel's visions to historical empires. Honestly, you can make a good case for either one. We can talk later if you're interested in putting those together.

But then the visions of chapter eight and chapter 11 in this Hebrew section focus more narrowly on the trials of God's people under a particularly hostile ruler who appears in chapter eight as the little horn.

And we'll get to that. But they focus specifically on the Persian and Greek periods.

[12 : 34] Now what I want to do today is walk through Daniel's vision in chapter eight and its interpretation. Thank you, Evan. And just walk through Daniel's vision in chapter eight and then consider some implications for us today.

All right, so let's go through this. Verse two, start at the beginning of the chapter. Verse two, Daniel sees himself in Susa, the citadel.

Susa was 220 miles east of Babylon. It had been conquered by the Medes and it would become one of the four capital cities of the Persian empire under Cyrus. So it's a fitting location for Daniel's vision which begins with the empire of the Medes and Persians represented by the ram.

According to verse 20. And then later on the kingdom of Greece which arises later. Now Daniel wasn't necessarily physically in Susa but that's where he saw himself in the vision. Is this city that would become central in the Persian empire.

And Daniel sees two animals. A ram and then a goat. And both would have been recognized symbols of power. Powerful animals representing powerful rulers in the ancient near east.

[13 : 46] Verse three and four. The ram has two horns. Representing Media and Persia. Now the Medes arose first in what is now northwestern Iran.

They became prominent after the fall of the Assyrian empire in 612 BC. But the Persians were stronger even though they came later. Cyrus the Persian who was also of Median descent defeated the Median king and united the Medes and Persians in a single empire in 550 BC.

That's the picture of two horns. One horn comes up later. The second horn is the stronger. And the Persian empire dominated the near east for 200 years. So verse four.

See that picture. The ram charging west, north, south. Seemingly unconquerable. He did as he pleased. He became great. But then in verse five. The goat.

Behold. A male goat came from the west. Now verse 21. I'm sort of working with Daniel's vision and the interpretation. We're going through both at the same time. So verse 21.

[14 : 49] You see that. The goat is the king of Greece. Verse five. Describes the goat's rapid descent to power. Coming from the west across the face of the earth without touching the ground.

He's sort of rapid, rapidly moving. And he's marked by a conspicuous or prominent horn between his eyes. Which verse 21 identifies as the first king of Greece.

Now if you've studied your ancient history, it's pretty obvious that this is talking about Alexander the Great. 336 BC. He became the ruler of Greece.

For the next 12 years, he expanded his empire from Greece into North Africa, through the Middle East, and all the way to Western India. He was undefeated in battle.

He is seen as one of the greatest military generals who ever lived. Verse six to seven says, he destroyed the ram and stomped on him. He took over the former Median Persian empire.

[15 : 47] He was not only great like the ram, but verse eight, exceedingly great. But then, same thing happens to him that happened to the ram. When he was strong, the great horn was broken.

Alexander the Great fell ill and died suddenly at the age of only 32 while he was in Babylon. After his death, his kingdom was divided between four of his military generals.

They fought over it for a while, and then eventually it sort of settled into four pieces. Verse 22 refers to those. And those four kingdoms endured for 150 years. And Daniel's vision in chapter 11 focuses in more detail on two of those four kingdoms, which he calls the king of the north and the king of the south, who were the Seleucids in Mesopotamia and the Ptolemies in Egypt, who were right next to the promised land and had the most impact on that.

So, now, before we go on, and before you get lost in all those ancient history details, let me make two brief observations so far. First, this is an unstable picture.

Kingdoms rise up, they seem invincible, they last for a long time, and then they fall just as quickly as they arose. Second, this is a very scary vision. Beastly empires, arrogant rulers, dominating the world through violence and intimidation, seeking to make themselves great, one after another.

[17 : 16] And if you notice, there's no divine intervention in this vision. There's no word of guidance from heaven. There's no comforting word of assurance, at least not yet.

And then in verse 9 to 12, the scariest part of it all. Out of one of them came a little horn. Daniel spends more time describing this little horn in verse 9 through 14 and 23 through 25 than either the ram or the goat.

Now, if you remember, in chapter 7, there was also a little horn. So, turn back a page. Chapter 7, verse 8, Daniel sees a terrifying beast with ten horns.

And then verse 8, I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking great things.

And then verse 25 of chapter 7 goes on to describe the work of this little horn, this ruler. And it says, he shall speak words against the Most High.

[18 : 34] Chapter 7, verse 25, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High and shall think to change the times and the law and they shall be given into his hand for a time times and half a time.

So this little horn, as an arrogant guy, but he's not just an arrogant ruler, there's plenty of those, he specifically attacks God and God's people and God's law.

And for a time, he succeeds in doing so. Now turn ahead to chapter 8. This little horn appears again. And again, he's characterized by extreme arrogance.

Verse 9, 10, 11, and 25 talk about he grew exceedingly great. Verse 10, it grew great even to the host of heaven. He's sort of challenging the angels of God.

Verse 11, he became great even as great as the prince of the host. That is God himself. Verse 25 says, he shall even rise up against the prince of princes.

[19 : 43] Isaiah 14 had used similar language when Isaiah was describing the king of Babylon. Isaiah said this, Isaiah said, you said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven.

Above the stars of God, I will set my throne on high. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will make myself like the most high. Then of course, Isaiah says, but God's going to bring you down. And so this little horn is described in a very similar way, rising up against God and in his arrogance attacking the people of God, the worship of God and the truth of God.

Verse 10, some of the host and some of the stars it threw to the ground and trampled on them. And verse 12 says, and a host will be given over to it together with the regular burnt offering.

Now, these verses are a bit tricky to understand. Okay, because usually the word host, the word host just means an army. Okay, it doesn't mean, it's not a hospitality word here. Right? It means an army.

And so it's usually referring to either the stars in the sky or the angels of heaven. But here, it seems to actually be referring to God's people on earth. There's a connection, and we'll see this in a bit again, but there's a deep connection between God's people on earth and God's armies in heaven.

[21 : 02] And Daniel shows us that they're connected together even in how they're described. It's not that it's not that this guy actually conquers angels, but that he's attacking God's people who are being protected and who are linked to the armies of heaven.

Okay? Verse 11, so he's attacking the people, the host of God. Then, verse 11, he attacks the worship of God. The regular burnt offering was taken away and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown.

In other words, he takes over the temple of God in Jerusalem where burnt offerings were offered every morning and evening. That was a sign of total devotion to God.

That was the people coming before God every day and saying, God, we are seeking your kingdom first. We love you. You are the one and only true God. And he takes it away. He banishes the worship of God.

Verse 12 says, it will throw truth to the ground. He attacks the people of God, the worship of God, and the truth of God. And verse 12 says, this little horn will act and prosper.

[22 : 08] Now, if the ram is Median Persia, if the goat is Greece, then who fits the description of the little horn? Now, there are a lot of things that scholars disagree about when you look at the book of Daniel and read different commentaries.

But everyone pretty much agrees on this one. Everyone pretty much agrees the little horn of chapter 8 is primarily referring to a man named Antiochus IV.

He was the Seleucid ruler who reigned over Syria and Palestine and Egypt from about 175 to 164 BC. He is also known as Antiochus Epiphanes, which is the Greek word for manifest or displayed.

On his coins, there was an impression of his head with a star on his head and the words, King Antiochus, God manifest, bearer of victory.

Now, why does Daniel's vision focus so much on this one guy? Right? This vision spans 400 years and yet he focuses much of his vision on this one man, this little horn.

[23 : 20] And the answer is, the reason why, is Antiochus was not just one among many arrogant and proud rulers. He, specifically, more than anyone else, in this 400 year period, he attempted to wipe out the people of God, the worship of God, and the truth of God.

So what did Antiochus do just a little bit? 169 BC, Antiochus invaded Jerusalem. He needed some cash for his military campaigns. So he took the valuable vessels from the temple of God.

And then he went back home. You think, well, that's pretty bad, but Nebuchadnezzar did it too. But then two years later, it gets much worse. 167 BC, he came back determined to wipe out the monotheistic faith, biblical faith, of the Jews, and determined to make Jerusalem into a pagan Greek city.

He plundered and burned Jerusalem, killed thousands of Jews, invaded the temple, halted the daily sacrifices, dedicated the temple to the Greek god Zeus, offered a pig on the altar, burned copies of the scriptures, executed people found in possession of them, outlawed circumcision, put to death mothers who had circumcised their sons, compelled Jews to offer sacrifice to idols, and eat unclean meat on pain of death.

If you ever read the books of 1st and 2nd Maccabees, they're in what we call the Apocrypha, they describe these events in more detail. It was the most intense persecution that God's people had faced, perhaps ever in their history, and certainly since the exile to Babylon.

[25 : 12] Many caved into the pressure to deny their faith, many others were killed or fled, and in the middle of it, it seemed that God did nothing to stop it.

How could a pagan idol worshiper walk into the holiest place on earth that God had said, I will put my name here, I will dwell here with you, this is my holy place, how could he walk in there, abolish God's commandments, set up worship of idols, and get away with it?

Seeing a vision like this or experiencing events like these can provoke many questions. Now many of us haven't experienced that kind of persecution or opposition to our faith or trauma in our lives.

One question that comes that might be asked is why. Some of the Psalms ask this question, Psalm 22, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from the words of my groaning? I say to God, my rock, why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

[26 : 44] Sometimes that's a question that comes up. Maybe you've been through trauma of some kind. Maybe you can understand what it's like to be attacked and persecuted in some form or other.

But the question that's asked here in verse 13 is how long, which is also a common question in the Psalms. Psalm 13, how long, O Lord?

Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart? All the day, how long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

O Lord, Psalm 94, O Lord, how long shall the wicked triumph? God, in the midst of torment and injustice and persecution and mistreatment, the God of the Bible permits his people to ask such questions.

And in fact, by teaching us to pray through the Psalms, God teaches us to include those questions in our prayers and to identify with fellow believers who cry out in pain and under persecution, to call out to God when his word is twisted and thrown to the ground and when his people are forcibly prevented from worshiping and praying together.

[28 : 05] How long? But the striking thing here is look at who asked this question. It's not Daniel who asked this question. It's not a human being who asked this question.

It is a holy one. That is a heavenly being who calls out on behalf of God's suffering and mistreated people. When the people of God are attacked, when the worship of God is forcibly stopped, when the truth of God is thrown to the ground, heaven takes notice, and the holy ones cry out on our behalf, how long?

If you have ever been or will be persecuted, mistreated, opposed, for the name of Christ, know that you are not alone.

Even if you have no human companions, the heavenly host is watching and crying out to God on your behalf. And in verse 14, the answer comes, how long?

For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state. In other words, violent hostility against God's word, God's people, and God's worship will last for a while, but it won't last forever.

[29 : 36] Antiochus took over the temple in 167 BC. About three years later, in 164 BC, he ended up provoking a violent revolt. And Judas Maccabeus retook the city of Jerusalem with his army, rededicated the temple to Yahweh, to the God of the Bible, and restored the worship of God.

Now, scholars go back and forth about these 2,300 evenings and mornings. Is it 2,300 evening and morning sacrifices or 1,150 days?

Close to, but not quite, the amount of time between the stopping of the sacrifices in 167 and the rededication of the temple in 164. Is it 2,300 days? Just about the amount of time between the murder of the legitimate high priest in 171 to the rededication of the temple in 164.

But I think it's not meant to be an exact number. I think it's best to see 2,300 evenings and mornings as a symbolic or representative number for a significant but limited period of time.

time. Just as Daniel talked about time, times, and half a time in chapter 7, verse 25. The point is, the persecution is going to last for a while, not just for a day or two, but it's also not going to last forever.

[31 : 02] And at the end of this frightening vision in verse 14 and verse 26 and verse 25 and verse 26, there's finally a word of comfort. the sanctuary shall be restored.

Verse 14 and the end of verse 25, he shall be broken. This little horn shall be broken, but by no human hand. Antiochus died not when Judas Maccabeus took Jerusalem, but in the next year.

He died in 163 B.C. So here's the point. Arrogant nations will eventually collapse. Those who fight against God's people will finally perish.

This was true of Antiochus in the second century B.C., perhaps the greatest threat that God's people faced over the course of several centuries. And throughout history, it has also been true of many other arrogant rulers who have targeted God's people, who have prohibited God's worship, and who have suppressed God's word.

They have prospered for a while, but none of them has lasted forever. None of their empires have lasted forever. They have eventually been brought down. Now, what do we take away from this vision?

[32 : 23] Well, let's look at Daniel's response himself in verse 15 to 18 and verse 27. First off, Daniel's confused. Verse 15, he says, when I saw the vision, I sought to understand it.

And God sends an angel, Gabriel, first time Gabriel appears in the Bible by name, but God sends an angel to explain the meaning of the vision to him. But even after Gabriel explains it in verse 27, the end of verse 27, he says, I still didn't understand it.

Now, isn't that interesting? Even when God himself gives a vision about the future to one of his most faithful and intelligent and humble servants, even when God sends an angel to explain the vision to him, Daniel still doesn't fully understand it.

You see, the future is always going to be somewhat veiled to us. That's why you should be suspicious of anyone who claims to understand all the prophecies in the Bible with perfect clarity and has detailed predictions of exactly what's going to happen in the future leading up to the return of Christ.

That's not how we're meant to respond to these visions. Even as they reveal some things, they also keep some things mysterious.

[33 : 44] How, when, exactly what it's going to look like. So Daniel's confused. His understanding is limited. But second, he's utterly overwhelmed.

Verse 17. He's frightened and fell on my face. He fainted with fear. Verse 18.

I fell into a deep sleep with my face to the ground. He's completely overcome. Verse 27. Even after it's interpreted, he was sick in bed for many days. And even after he got up and went back to work, he says, I was appalled by this vision.

You see, God doesn't usually pull back the curtain on the future as he did with Daniel because it would be too much for us to handle. I mean, it would be too much for most of us to handle if God just showed us some of our own personal future and what our life is going to look like one, two, three, four, five years down the line.

Most of us wouldn't be able to handle it. And so 99.99% of the time God wisely keeps it concealed from us and gives it to us one moment at a time.

[34 : 57] But every once in a while, God pulls back the curtain and gives some insight into the future to one of his servants because he wants us to know that the future is in his hands just as the past and the present are in his hands.

He wants us to know that when everything seems chaotic and out of control and unfair and overwhelming, overwhelming, when the world seems dominated by arrogant beasts, when God's people are persecuted and attacked, and when there doesn't seem to be any divine intervention that you can see.

God wants us to know he's still on the throne and evil won't triumph in the end. And he wants us to know that God isn't surprised by all that's happening to us.

He even gave us a heads up beforehand that it was going to be difficult, but he's bigger than the trial we're experiencing and he's going to bring us through the darkness into the light once again.

Most of us, if we've lived in this country, haven't experienced the kind of persecution that the Jewish people did under Antiochus Epiphanes. We're quite far away from that. But whatever the nature of the opposition or being personally attacked for no apparent reason, whatever the suffering and trials you may be going through, whatever the things that are disappointments that threaten to kill your hope and lead you to just despair and give up, God wants to say, I'm with you.

[36 : 51] It's not going to last forever. You know, we can also find comfort in something that Daniel only saw from a distance. Daniel saw a holy one, a heavenly being calling out on behalf of God's suffering and mistreated people.

But we see in Jesus Christ, the true God manifest. We see the holy God, God, who became a human being and who entered into our pain and suffering and took upon himself the consequences of our sin and guilt and who called out when he hung on the cross, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And yet he wasn't saying that in defiant rejection of God, he was saying that in humble trust. God, because one of the next words he said is, Father, into your hand, I commit my spirit.

Jesus faced every one of our worst fears, every one of our greatest disappointments, every one of the things that threatened to crush our faith and hope and love once and for all, and he came up on the other side.

he rose again three days later and he promises what we just sang about in that great hymn, Jesus lives and so shall I.

[38 : 21] Jesus lives and so shall I for eternity and Jesus lives and so shall I today and tomorrow and this week and through whatever we have to endure during the time that we're on this earth.

on the night before he was crucified, Jesus said to his disciples, the world is going to hate you because they hated me first. If they persecuted me, they'll persecute you too.

If they kept my word, they'll also keep yours. And then he said, I've said all these things to you to keep you from falling away, to keep you from falling into despair when life doesn't turn out the way you hoped, when the road is longer and bumpier and harder than you ever imagined.

And to keep you from embracing a false hope that your life will always be easy and smooth, that's not what Jesus ever promised. But he said, I've also said these things to you so that you might have peace. In the world you will have trouble, but take heart.

I have overcome the world. Jesus gives us a very sobering and realistic picture of what to expect, but he also gives us a very hopeful word.

[39 : 41] Take heart. I have overcome the world. Let us pray. Amen. Father, we thank you for this vision of Daniel.

We thank you, Lord, for the courage that you have given to your people in years and centuries past, those who have stood firm and who have endured great trials and who are that great cloud of witnesses that Hebrews speaks about that surround us.

and even in revelation, call out to you, how long, O Lord? And yet, Lord, we thank you above all for Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God.

Lord, we pray that we would consider him who endured such hardship so that we would not grow weary and lose heart. Lord, we pray that you would make us a people who are hopeful, not because we embrace false hopes, not because we live by wishful thinking, but a people who have our hope firmly rooted in you, our crucified and risen Savior.

And Lord, that you would give us faith and courage to live for you day by day. We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.