

3) Ministry From Spring Harvest - Chapter 5

by George Verwer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer and influence in government, and how God's people can bring about change through holiness and prayer.

Duration: 56:59

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3:1, Daniel 4:37 - 5:1, Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 2 Corinthians 4:7, 1 Peter 4:17

Topics: "Failure"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of understanding the book of Daniel and the changes that Daniel and his followers had to face. The speaker warns against complacency and emphasizes the need to be prepared for future challenges. The sermon also touches on the influence of Daniel's holiness and the impact of his prayers. The speaker notes that there are not many books on prayer because it is not of great interest to the average Christian, but emphasizes its importance in the Christian life.

Transcript

I don't believe it's a coincidence that Stuart was led to pray for Tehran and the land of Iran. Maybe he realized it, but in fact, as we look at Daniel, chapter 5, this morning, and we see the judgment that comes upon the Babylonian Empire, which is present-day Iraq, and that judgment came from the Medes and the Persians, which is present-day Iran. And what happened over a thousand-some hundred years ago repeated itself in history in our decade, in this decade of the 80s.

Also, when we think of Iraq and Iran, we're thinking of two of the most un-evangelized lands in the world. Probably all the believers in Iraq could sit in this tent, and that would be allowing for a lot of secret believers and people that we don't know about, as Iraq has been one of the lands on our hearts for close to 30 years. Iran has more believers, and Iranians are turning to Christ.

In many parts of the world, recently when I was in Pakistan, there were Iranian believers. A few weeks ago, I was preaching at a church in London, an Iranian church. So what we're talking about from the Word of God is not irrelevant, it's not just some ancient history, but we can see the relevance of it even as we read our newspapers.

I wanted to mention again just a couple of books. If you want to be a Daniel, you dare to be a Daniel, you might want to read some books on the subject of discipleship. A man who influenced me when I was a

student was the president of a Bible college, ended up launching out in ministry in different parts of the world.

His name was William MacDonald. He's written about 50 books, but his most popular book is a small little book you can read in a few hours, True Discipleship, and I know they have a lot of copies there at the book exhibition. I want to commend to you also a book by Ajit Fernando.

As we think of the world's religions, even as we read this book of Daniel, we realize how much we have to learn about what other people believe, what other people think. And this is a book that I believe is absolutely strategic in these days of syncretism, where it's considered bigotry to believe that Jesus is the only way, the truth, and the life. It's called Jesus and the World Religions by a Sri Lankan, Ajit Fernando, and it's available at the book exhibition.

I want to commend to you a book that will build your faith or that you can give to an agnostic or someone who has doubts about the Christian faith. C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity. And lastly, what I consider the greatest Christian book of this century, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones' book, Spiritual Depression, Its Cause and Cure.

Unfortunately, the title turns people off. It's a handbook on how to be a Daniel, a Shadrach, a Meshach, a Bendigo. It has a chapter about being in God's gymnasium, has a powerful chapter about trials and difficulties, and I believe it is the most significant Christian book of this century.

None of these books compare to this book. This is God's Word. These are just sermons in print.

Even some of my sermons are put into print, to my own amazement. One of my books has brought me 17,000 personal letters, so God can even use ordinary books. I mentioned during the second session on our first day, Wednesday, that I welcome any kind of written feedback.

I prefer you give it to me at the end of the meeting or the end of the week, after the Saturday meeting, rather than handing it to me. I once had some feedback when I was preaching. A man came up and gave me a note.

I had heard about this in George Whitefield's ministry. People would send up notes to him. I've just been saying, by the power of God.

In old George, he used to speak in the open air to 20,000 people, would just turn up the power. The note I got said, your time's up, please sit down now. Now, this morning for our reading, and I want to again read the whole chapter, I want a little change of pace.

I'm going to read from a paraphrase. I'm going to read from the Living Bible. And you can perhaps just follow in your own Bible, or you may just want to listen to this modern paraphrase of this unique chapter in the Word of God.

Hear the word of the Lord. Belshazzar the king invited a thousand of his officers to a great feast, where the wine flowed freely. While Belshazzar was drinking, he was reminded of the gold and silver cups taken long before from the temple in Jerusalem during Nebuchadnezzar's reign and brought to Babylon.

Belshazzar ordered that these sacred cups be brought in to the feast. And when they arrived, he and his princes, wives and concubines, drank toasts from them to their idols made of gold and silver, brass, iron,

wood and stone. Suddenly, as they were drinking from these cups, they saw the fingers of a man's hand writing on the plaster of the wall opposite the lampstand.

The king himself saw the fingers as they wrote. His face blanched with fear, and such terror gripped him that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way beneath him. Bring the magicians and the astrologers, he screamed.

Bring the Chaldeans, whoever reads that writing on the wall and tells me what it means, will be dressed in purple robes of royal honor with a gold chain around his neck and become the third ruler in the kingdom. He wasn't impetuous, was he? But when they came, none of them could understand the writing or tell him what it meant. The king grew more and more hysterical.

His face reflected the terror he felt, and his officers, too, were shaken. But when the queen's mother heard what was happening, she rushed to the banquet hall and said to Belshazzar, Calm yourself, your majesty, don't be so pale and frightened over this. For there is a man in your kingdom who has within him the spirit of the holy gods.

In the days of your father, this man was found to be as full of wisdom and understanding as though he were himself a god. And in the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar, he was made chief of all the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, soothsayers of Babylon. Call for this man Daniel or Belshazzar, as the king called him, for his mind is filled with divine knowledge and understanding.

He can interpret dreams, explain riddles, solve naughty problems. He will tell you what the writing means. So Daniel was rushed to see the king.

The king asked him, Are you the Daniel that King Nebuchadnezzar brought from Israel as a Jewish captive? I have heard that you have the spirit of the gods within you, and that you are filled with enlightenment and wisdom. My wise men and astrologers have tried to read that writing on the wall and tell me what it means, but they can't. I am told that you can solve all kinds of mysteries.

If you can tell me the meaning of those words, I will clothe you in purple robes with a gold chain around your neck and make you the third ruler in the kingdom. Verse 17 is a verse I'd like you to mark. It's got a lot of interesting insight.

Daniel answered, Keep your gifts or give them to someone else, but I will tell you what they mean. Your majesty, the most high God, gave Nebuchadnezzar, who long ago preceded you, a kingdom and majesty and glory and honor. And he gave him such majesty that all the nations of the world trembled before him in fear.

He killed any who offended him and spared any he liked, and at his whim they rose or fell. But when his heart and mind were hardened with pride, that's another key word, God removed him from his royal throne and took away his glory. He was chased out of his palace into the fields.

His thoughts and feelings became those of an animal, and he lived among the wild donkeys. He ate grass like the cows, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven. Until at last he knew that the most high overrules the kingdoms of men, and that he appoints anyone he desires to reign over them.

And you, his successor, O Belshazzar, you knew all this, yet you have not been humbled, for you have defied the Lord of heaven and brought here these cups from his temple. You and your officers and wives

and concubines have been drinking wine from them while praising gods of silver, gold, brass, iron and wood and stone. Gods that neither see nor hear nor know anything at all.

But you have not praised the God who gives you the breath of life and controls your destiny. And so God sent these fingers to write this message. Many, many tekkel parson.

This is what it means. Many means numbered. God has numbered the days of your reign, and they are ended.

Tekel means weighed. You have been weighed in God's balance and have failed the test. Parson means divided.

Your kingdom will be divided and given to the Medes and the Persians. Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was robed in purple. A golden chain was hung around his neck.

He was proclaimed third ruler in the kingdom. That very night, Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was killed. And Darius the Mede entered the city and began reigning at the age of 62.

Let us pray. Our God, this is your holy word. Though it was written some 2000 and some 100 years ago, we believe it is relevant in 1989.

We ask you, Lord, for the faith, the wisdom, the discernment, the grace to receive from your word that which you would want to give us this morning. We come, O God, with a spirit of faith. We come with a spirit of expectation.

We humble ourselves before you and your mighty hand, O God, that we may not play the fool, that we may not be sitting in some kind of deck chair as the ship is sinking, that we may not say, peace, peace, when there is no peace, that we would be delivered from the apathy of our day, the compromise of our day, the worldliness of our day, the misplaced values of our day, the confused priorities of our day, and become your men and your women. To go where you want us to go and to do what you want us to do, that self may be crucified and that you may be magnified. We pray in Jesus name.

Amen. Each morning we've been considering four dynamic laser beam words from the chapters that we have been studying. In that first chapter, we looked at sovereignty, discipline, holiness and perseverance.

In chapter three, we looked at pressure. We looked at courage. We looked at deliverance.

We looked at presence as we saw the presence of God in the fiery furnace. And now, as we go on to chapter five, I want to give you four other words. I had about seven words jumping out of this chapter.

But I wanted to keep it to four. So I'm interested to see how I'm going to do that. The first word is the word that we have already been talking about.

It's the word change. In order to understand Daniel, you need to read the whole book. However, even the chapters we have been looking at enable us to rapidly understand the awesome change that Daniel was having to face and that those few other followers of God and people in captivity were having to face.

One of the things they had to face was the fickleness and the pendulum swings and the up and downness of the leaders. And I think this is especially true as we look at Nebuchadnezzar. It referred later on, Daniel, to the situation in which Nebuchadnezzar had seemingly repented, had begun to acknowledge the living

God.

And Daniel and his followers or co-workers had been an enormous influence. I don't think it is God's will for God's people to take over governments. There is a theology, mainly comes from the states, that is along that line.

I will not get into that. It's quite a controversy. And I think that's one of the reasons that Charles Colson wrote his unique book, Kingdoms in Conflict.

I heard that they sold out on the first day, but I think it's one of the reasons that I've ordered more. I hope, by the way, that you will patronize your own home Christian bookshop, because many of the bookshops in this country are really struggling. And some of them will be out of business if God's people don't pray and get behind their ministry.

But we do believe, and it's very clear in Scripture, that as God's people, and this is a very strong message here in Daniel, are to influence government. We are to influence kings and prime ministers. One of the 20 different ministries based on our ships is a ministry, a very quiet ministry, to government leaders.

In fact, I'll never forget when Lagos was in London, I even had the privilege of giving my testimony and speaking to members of parliament. Not the people who are generally attracted to Operation Mobilization, but they were attracted to that ship anchored there next to His Majesty's Belfast, or Her Majesty's Belfast. I don't know if they keep changing the name of a historical ship.

But what an opportunity we have had in port after port to share Jesus Christ with leaders of governments, with sheikhs, with prime ministers. And this is something that we need more of in the world today. In God's sovereign purposes, through all the judgment on Jerusalem, God was to overrule in ways that we can never fully understand and use Daniel as a mighty influence, which changed the life of Nebuchadnezzar and influenced that kingdom.

And it must have been somewhat easier for God's people to survive during that time. In his speech, he refers to that lapse that Nebuchadnezzar had verse 20, and when his heart was lifted up, his mind hardened in pride, he was disposed from his kingly throne and they took his glory from him. Notice the effect of pride.

It's one of the words I had on my list, but it's not in my top four. The result of pride. I think it's good if you just turn back to chapter four, verse 33, to just see what happened when Nebuchadnezzar got puffed up.

Daniel had prophesied this. Verse 33, the same hour was the thing fulfilled after Daniel prophesied upon Nebuchadnezzar and he was driven from men and did eat grass like oxen and his body was wet with dew of heaven till his hair was grown like the eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws. People today call this mental illness.

But as fast as it went, it came, it went, and we're not given all the reasons. Often in the Bible, we are not given all the reasons for what takes place. And one of our problems is that some of us still seem to be living in the age of reason.

We want to reason everything out. We want to understand it according to our way of thinking. But God's ways are often above our ways.

So we read in the next verse, And at the end of the day, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven. He turned back to God, and my understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored him who liveth forever, whose dominion is everlasting, an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing and he doth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand or say unto him, What doest thou? Amazing.

Absolutely amazing. We could give four messages just on that one verse. The enormous influence of Daniel, the great impact that Daniel's holiness, that Daniel's life, and tomorrow we will see, and perhaps the most important, reading the influence of Daniel's prayers.

I went through the entire book exhibition looking for books on prayer. There are not many. You don't blame them for not bringing many books on prayer, do you? People don't buy books on prayer.

Why don't people buy books on prayer? Well, that's pretty easy. You may not be a graduate in logic, but they don't buy books on prayer because prayer is not of great interest to the average evangelical fish floating downstream in the present-day Christian scene. Forgive me if I'm too blunt.

Maybe I got it from Daniel. And I believe that unless we get our prayer lives sorted out, we are not going to make an impact on Britain, we are not going to see the revival, and it will not be done when just a few thousand gather for special events, though I believe in those special events. It will take place when in our prayer, when in our churches, we become, as Jesus said we should be, a house of prayer.

Not just a house of praise, not just a house of fellowship, not just a house of relationship. And I believe in all those things. In fact, I'm invited around the world to speak about the ship ministry.

And so I speak about fellowship. And I speak about relationship. And I speak about worship.

But I believe that Satan's greatest attack upon the church today is to cause us by one means or other, by pressure, by busyness, by extremism, by tangents, by our own subtle pride and unwillingness to repent. Satan is trying to use prayerlessness to bring the church into confusion and disarray. It would be a great blessing if a few more of us at seven tomorrow morning could gather with Stuart and his co-workers to seek God's face, even if you just pop in there for 15 or 20 minutes.

I didn't want to go to that early morning prayer meeting. I'm fanatic about protecting my own morning prayer time. I get up early, I go out to the beach, and I pray.

God brought a word into my vocabulary years ago called balance. And so I got up early and I went out to the beach and prayed, studied the word, and then went in there only 45 minutes, then grabbed a quick breakfast, then ran or walked over here. It is interesting in our conferences how we always put the prayer meetings at rather unusual times for the average Christian.

Praise God for the decision here at Spring Harvest two nights ago to give prime time to Holy Ghost praying. Hallelujah. It's a victory.

And let's keep that victory as we go back to our homes, as we go back to our prayer closets. Yes, there is enormous change taking place in Britain today. There's enormous change taking place in the church.

There's phenomenal growth in some parts of the world with all of the change that that brings. That is linked also with population explosion, as the world is now over 5,000 million people. We only had 1,000 million around 1830.

Your great-great-grandfather or his father lived in a world of about 1,000 million people. It seems incredible we have that many in the Indian subcontinent. And now we have five pushing towards 6,000 million people in the world.

So we can be fooled by some of the church explosion in just a few countries like Korea. And Brazil and Mexico. That does not represent where most of the world is today.

We're dealing in a day of phenomenal change. The buildup of nuclear weapons. The fact that soon Muslim countries, soon, get this, Muslim countries will have nuclear weapons.

The first will be Pakistan. She probably already has it to the dismay of India. Decisions are being made between Washington and Rawalpindi during the next few weeks that will determine the destiny of Pakistan, will determine what Pakistan does with her nuclear bomb.

We haven't got time to go into this. But I think we understand we live in days of tremendous change. Here in Britain, there may be soon a change in terms of the government and who is in power.

One thing we know, as God's people, by his grace, we can handle whatever change God in his sovereignty brings in our direction. To bring this down on a more personal level, you, of course, will face change perhaps in your home situation, as you get married, as you have children, as the children grow up. I found in my own life that I had to relearn the lessons of each decade again in the next decade in a new set of circumstances.

Don't think the Christian life is always new lessons, always new horizons. You have to relearn old lessons. How are you with that? Just in reading this chapter, to go from chapter 4, verse 37, to chapter 5, verse 1, we find an enormous change.

Now, there are actually a number of years involved there, quite a few. But we go from Nebuchadnezzar. Look at verse 37.

Praising and extolling and honoring the King of heaven, whose works are truth, his ways justice, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase. Amazing. Then, verse 1 in chapter 5, Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords and drank wine before the thousands.

We are dealing now with a different man. And if you study it carefully, you will see that Daniel no longer was in any strategic place. He was no longer in any strategic place.

He was still there. The queen's mother, which was probably, I think it said the queen's wife, was probably the queen's mother, maybe even grandmother. It's different interpretations.

She knew about Daniel. And so, at this time of crisis, when the handwriting came on the wall, it was this woman. It was the queen or probably the queen's mother, verse 10, that came.

For she had remembered Daniel. Now, the queen, verse 10, by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came unto the banquet house and the queen spoke, O king, live forever. Let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed.

And then she reminds him about this man, Daniel. Enormous change. When people first heard that spring harvest this year was going to be called deck chairs on the Titanic, many people did not know what that was about.

But I did. Because for 21 years, six years before, five years before we even had a ship, I've been reading and praying and visiting ships and studying ships and studied the Titanic. And if you don't know history, we might just remind you that they said the Titanic was unsinkable.

And even when it was beginning to sink, somebody on the ship said, even God could not sink this ship. Somebody actually said that. And they played the music.

The captain said, even as the ship was beginning to sink, or at least trouble had started, don't worry, let's play the music. And it was one of the greatest tragedies in the history of shipping. And if you watched the news last night, your heart probably sunk as you read about that Exxon bulk oil carrier that sunk off the coast of Alaska and has given one of the greatest pollution oil spillages in the history of planet Earth.

Where is this world going? I'd love to speak to you about the rainforests of Brazil. I'd love to speak to you about AIDS. I'd love to speak to you about pollution.

I'd love to speak to you about a lot of subjects. Because I believe as God's people, we are to be interested in those things. And that was featured at Spring Harvest.

I remember two years ago when I had a seminar on these things. And, you know, it's interesting characters like myself who are known as missionaries and who have as our priority, world evangelism, reaching people for Christ, building the church. We are often accused of not being interested in these other things because we don't speak about them so much.

You know, when you speak, you often have to speak on what people ask you to speak on. I have enough trouble wandering down my A roads and getting off the motorway as it is. But do not think that characters like Stuart McAllister and myself who are always going on challenging people to pray for world missions are not concerned about all of these other things in our planet.

Because we are committed to our planet. And the Bible says that this great treasure, God's treasure, is in this earthen vessel. And we have to be interested in that vessel as well.

The second word, the second word that burns on my heart is the word judgment. Not very popular anymore. A lot of things that are not popular to preach on anymore.

As I was reading through the first part of this chapter, I noticed how many times drinking was mentioned. And years ago, my, I would have spent at least 15 minutes preaching against alcohol. I was a teetotaler.

My grandfather died a drunkard. I saw what alcohol could do as I worked among drunkards for a couple of years in Chicago and Knoxville. And when I came to Europe, I was really, really strong in preaching against drinking of alcoholic beverages.

Then I got contextualized into Spain and into France. And I realized many of God's people didn't agree with me. And then I realized perhaps they were right.

And so the pendulum swung, which so often happens. I would never preach anymore, hardly ever against drinking. Whether you believe in moderation or whether you believe in teetotaling, the Bible condemns

drunkenness.

And you cannot take drunkenness as a factor out of what was going on here in this chapter. And it would not be mentioned three times. And in the book of Galatians, it says all drunkards or no drunkard will have his place in the kingdom of God.

That's all I'm going to say, except that I believe the devil is trying to use drugs and alcohol as one of the main tactics to destroy Great Britain. And if we never speak out, even the number killed on the highways. Last night it was emphasized again on television that smoking is one of the major killers.

And as Christians, we're hesitant to speak out against smoking because we know a person can be born again and love Jesus Christ and still smoke. And we've all heard the Spurgeon testimony too many times. But they didn't know in Spurgeon's day what we know in our day.

And the fact is non-Christians, non-Christians are leading the attack against smoking and experiencing often greater victory than Christians in the area of stopping cancer caused by smoking. Side issues, but they're there in the text. Judgment because of drunkenness, because of drug addiction, because of sin, because man is turning against God.

Judgment will come. They especially tried to slap God in the face when they went to the storage place and they took the temples. They took the vessels, silver vessels that were brought from the temple and they put their drink, who knows what kind of bombshell booze this was.

They put this drink in these vessels of God and they began to have more. As they drank the wine, verse 4, from those vessels, they praised the gods of gold and of silver and of bronze. It's interesting that the very next verse says in the same hour, in the same hour, it doesn't take long for the judgment to come.

I remember, this may seem silly and maybe it's more for young people, but I remember once as a baby Christian breaking the laws of God in the area of lust, sitting in the front of my little car back in the woods with my girlfriend, I don't know if you remember how it was in the 50s, go see the film Back to the Future. I ran Spring Harvest, I would probably show it. But I was sitting there in the front of my car and I had just become a Christian and I knew from the word of God that I could not sleep with her and that would be fornication.

I'd already started to preach against that at 17 to young people's groups. But I didn't know about petting. I didn't know how far I could go with these big hands.

And of course, I believed that kissing was a gift from God and I was heavy into that as a good evangelical mecker. But I was kissing away this young girl who I was deeply infatuated with. She was about the 32nd girl since I was age four, a little problem in that area.

And as my hand began to move into what I believe should be more linked with marriage rather than romantic play in the front of a car in the woods, God's chastening hand came down on me. I mean, nothing like this Daniel experience, you know, writing on the wall. Just a gentle thing.

A policeman knocked on the window of the car. I tell you, I began to sweat. I always had an uneasy feeling about policemen.

I had been in enough trouble, little things, housebreaking and vandalism and setting the woods on fire near my house and writing swear words on my enemy's house in black paint. Just little things. I wasn't in the mafia.

He knocked on the door and he said, you're not allowed to park here. OK, officer. Then the chastening continued, because as I went to pull my car out, I was a little nervous.

I went in the wrong gear and I backed the car up into a ditch. And there I was with my girlfriend spinning the wheels in a ditch. And her father, who was a drunkard, wanted her home at a specific time.

She was younger than me. He didn't trust me. And so we couldn't get out of the car.

We couldn't get the car out of the ditch. Here we were running down the road. We got to the phone.

We called her father. I said, I've got a little car trouble. Could you meet me on the main road and take your daughter home? And I'll go back and take care of my car.

He came immediately. He wasn't very sober, but he wanted to see the car. What would her father think? Finding my car in a ditch in the middle of the woods.

That night, I, as a young Christian, was accused of sleeping with his daughter. He intimidated me. And I was so sick as a Christian.

The next day, I had to go off to a Christian conference in the mountains. And I walked around the woods just repenting and repenting and repenting. I can tell you, nothing like that ever happened again.

Oh, how wonderful to learn these lessons when you're 17. The chastening hand of God. You do something foolish, God knows how to chasten you.

He doesn't always do it that way. Don't get any little black and white picture how this works. Many times, God will allow you to go much further, make a much bigger mess.

Other times, you will be so insensitive, you won't even recognize the chastening hand of God. You won't recognize the judgment of God. That relationship with that girl broke with a lot of hurt.

And I've had a terrible memory of it all my life. She immediately reacted. She was very much, quote, in love with me.

And she was deeply hurt when I broke off the relationship. Because I thought it was getting too serious. And then she went back and married her stepbrother.

And I hardly ever saw her again. And actually, I was trying to win her to Jesus Christ. No wonder I have a failure's testimony.

Judgment. It may be little judgment. It may be just a little chastisement.

But it's real. And I hope that if God is trying to chastise you, if God is trying to say something to you, something that the average person may not see in the Book of Daniel, but you can see it, I pray that you may respond before it is too late. There are so many examples of judgment in the Book of Daniel.

And of course, ultimately, we have the handwriting on the wall. And I think we must look at that for a few moments right now, though it comes toward the end of the chapter. Three words in Aramaic.

They knew what these words said, but they didn't know what the words meant. And Daniel was chosen to interpret these words. Verse 26.

This is the interpretation of the thing. Many means God hath numbered thy kingdom. And finished it.

Tekel 27. Thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting. I'm sure you've guessed I'm back in the authorized version.

28. Petus. Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and the Persians.

And then the judgment came. Verse 30. And that night was Belshazzar, the king of Chaldeans, slain.

And Darius the Mede took the kingdom being about three score and two years old. You see, Darius, we could spend a lot of time discussing which Darius this is. It's not the same one as in the Book of Ezra.

Probably operating under Cyrus as a general. He was already outside the city. The trouble was already there.

But they were having too big a party. They were having too much fun to know what was going on. And I'm not against a little fun.

It's therapeutic. It's part of our human factor. But oh, my.

There's a time for fun and there's a time to be serious. We may we need to make sure that in our churches. With all of our activities.

With all of our fun. That we're not somehow in a deck chair on the Titanic experience. Churches actually sink.

I was in a church in Mexico City years ago. Was one of the biggest, greatest churches in Mexico City. A couple thousand went to that church.

When I got there. By the time I ever got there to preach. The church had sunk.

Immorality had come in. Division had come in. And in this huge building, almost as big as this.

There were 30 people. Don't be naive about Satan's strategy against the church. Let's not in our churches allow.

A deck chair on the Titanic experience. I believe in many of our churches. The handwriting is on the wall.

We are either going to have to have more prayer. More holiness. More godliness.

More integrity. More justice. More spiritual reality.

Or we are going to be judged as God's people. And so this passage of Scripture, my brothers and sisters. Is not some irrelevant bit of history.

That we argue about in our theological seminaries. But it is something incredibly relevant to us today. As we look and try from God's word.

This is God's handwriting for us today. A whole book of it. But we don't read it.

We don't study it. We don't memorize it. So we don't often know what God is doing.

I pray that we may search the Scriptures. And get God's handwriting in our hearts. For even in the New Testament.

It says that God is not writing anymore on tables of stone. But he is writing on our hearts. The psalmist said, I did thy word in my heart.

That I may not sin against you. Judgment may come. Let us not play the fool.

Let us gather in prayer. Let us repent and get right with God and one another. Let us learn from these great prophets.

And from these great Scriptures. And do what God would have us do. Let us ask the question.

As we go from here in a few minutes. Is the writing on the wall in some way? In my life. In my marriage.

I share this in fear and trembling. I was slow to see my mistakes. I was slow to see my sins about 10 years ago.

When I was too active. Taking too many meetings. Some 900 a year.

Caught up in the birth of the ship ministry. Not sensitive enough to my wife. And how different she was from me.

And that and other factors. She had two major surgeries after hepatitis in India. And perpetual travel with no place much to live.

On a permanent basis. She went into a deep depression. And I thank God for a woman who came to me.

And she was the woman to put the handwriting on the wall in my life. And she said, if you don't change your life. And if you don't change the way you are living.

And the way you are treating your wife. Then she may not recover from this depression. She was on medication.

The whole works. And I thank God for that dear woman. That put the handwriting on the wall in my life.

And I decided I had to change. And I went to my wife. As I have many times.

Not only apologized and repented. That was easy for me. I knew that message.

But it was changing. It was changing my lifestyle. It was slowing down.

It was bringing a little more balance into my life. In the midst of spiritual warfare. But by God's grace.

I was able to change. Able to develop a greater understanding of my dear wife. Be a little more sensitive.

I was so extreme. I would hardly give her any money. Oh yes.

Even in the early days. I became a little bit balanced. I finally gave her a pound.

And I said, look. I'm going to give you this. And you don't even have to account to me for this pound.

Can you imagine? That sounds worse than it was. Because in OM we live off all the donations. The missionary barrel.

Where do I think I got this? Somebody threw it away. In California. God can change us.

God can change us. But sometimes we're not even willing to see the writing on the wall. The writing is on the wall in some of your marriages.

You know it. What are you going to do about it? The writing is on the wall in some of your churches. But what are you going to do about it? The writing is on the wall in Great Britain.

But what are we going to do about it as a nation? Are we going to wait for judgment? God kept us last time from the German invasion and Nazi terrorism. But do you think he will keep us necessarily from the next? Modern invasion of the Medes and the Persians. Don't kid yourself.

Don't fool yourself. Don't get on the deck chair on the Titanic and make the great mistake. The two other words I want to share in our time is just about gone.

I'm so grateful for this poster ministry that Eddie has. This and he's so gracious. This one says 10 minutes to go.

Isn't that wonderful? Then he gets so caught up listening to the message. He forgets to bring the five minute one. And after that, don't worry.

I see the writing on the wall. After that, he pulls a little string. Trap door.

But let me give you these two other words. The third word is wisdom. When I read Daniel, when I watch Daniel, and we're going to see more of this tomorrow.

I see wisdom. And this old queen, she recognized a wise man. Here was a man we see in the next chapter who dwelt with God.

Here was a man who knew God. And because he knew God, because he walked with God, he had wisdom. And so he was able to handle crisis situations.

Brothers and sisters, we don't just need power. And how I believe we need the power of Christ. Hallelujah.

That's brought forward last night. But we also must have that wisdom. A.W. Tozer said the greatest gift needed in the church today is discernment.

Even if you take what you receive here in these Bible readings and you go back to your fellowship or your church in your town and you don't use common sense, you don't use wisdom, you don't use discernment. You will make a mess. Some people call me a missionary, but sometimes I've been a missionary.

Making messes all over the world. My prayer this morning is, oh God, give me wisdom. Give me wisdom.

Would you pray that prayer? Would you spend more time in the word? Would you get some of these great spiritual nuggets from some of these sermons in print in these books? Would you be a reader? Would you develop spiritual sensitivity and spiritual discernment that you may be a modern day Daniel? Yes, wisdom. It's written across the pages of Daniel's life. And with that, a deep integrity and reality has manifest in that brilliant verse.

Verse 17. Look at it. Then Daniel answered and said unto the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself.

Keep your money. Keep your money. He would not be motivated by money.

John White, and if you can get every book this man has written, many of them are there in the exhibition, but one that's no longer in print is probably the strongest book he ever wrote, called The Golden Cow. John White, The Golden Cow. He speaks about the money manipulation within the work of God.

And it's one of the things that scares me the most about present day materialistic Christianity. Daniel stood apart from the love of money and from the human rewards that the big people of this world sometimes like to give. And sometimes it's nothing more than religious bribery.

It's nothing more than money manipulation. Daniel said, You keep your money. I'll do this impossible thing.

I'll interpret this dream. By God's strength, he would do that. But you can keep your money.

Not many people who seem to have the strength to say that. And these days, we have sold out so easily, sold out to materialism. And the final word that I want to leave with you is the word deception.

This poor King Belshazzar was deceived. The armies were at the gate. And by the way, history shows that those armies discovered a special way into the city through the underground system.

That's why they were able to move in on that Murray night. This was laughed at by the skeptics many years ago. But history and archaeology has shown that they were able to tunnel into that city and pull off a surprise attack and take the place almost overnight.

Archaeology has been one of the greatest factors in strengthening my faith as one of those more Thomas type disciples. Yes, deception is one of Satan's methods. That king was deceived.

Those people, as they drank their wine, as they had their party, were deceived. And it is possible, I believe it is possible, for us to be God's children and still be deceived in some areas of our life. I know it was true in my marriage.

I know it was true in my ministry. I know it was true in some of the things that I once believed. Elements of deception.

Part of it is our human weakness and vulnerability. Part of it is satanic attack. Part of it is the fact that we're in a lost and fallen world with every kind of pressure.

But as we go from here this morning, let us pray, O God, O God, deliver me from any area of deception in my relationships, in my church life, in my leadership, in perceiving and understanding doctrine, in understanding what the Holy Spirit is doing today, that I may be a man of wisdom as well as a man of discipline. Let us pray. Our God and Father, we thank and praise You for this great chapter in Your Word.

And, O Lord, I believe some of us have seen the handwriting on the wall this morning. It's telling us that we are being weighed up, we are being measured, and we're not measuring up to Your Holy Word and to what we should be and what we should not be. Help us, O Lord, to see the handwriting on the wall, that chastening and judgment may soon come, may already be here.

Help us, Lord, to contextualize what we receive in this unique chapter with this unique man or men and women into our own situation, that we may not play the fool, that we would read other passages, especially in the New Testament, concerning forgiveness, concerning grace, concerning love, and bring into balance this powerful message on judgment and on wrath and on deception and sin and foolishness, that we may know that we are Your forgiven people and that You give us that second chance and that third chance. Because if You gave a second chance to Nebuchadnezzar, which You surely did after he blew everything, after he was wiped out, crawling in the grass, as You gave a second chance to Nebuchadnezzar, so, O God, You will give us a second chance. And we will return to You and we will worship You, O living God, and we will fall at Your feet every day of our life and honor You in everything we say, do, and grant this, we pray, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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