

Power With God Exemplified in Daniel

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining a heavenly position spiritually to prevail in power with God, as exemplified by Daniel's life and testimony.

Scripture: Ezekiel 14:12

Topics: "Spiritual Distinctiveness", "Power with God"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the significance of Daniel as a model of spiritual distinctiveness and power with God, contrasting him with other biblical figures like Noah and Job. He highlights that Daniel's unwavering faith and refusal to compromise with the world, even in the face of persecution, exemplify the necessity of maintaining a heavenly position to access divine power. Sparks argues that the Church today suffers from a lack of power due to its imitation of worldly practices, urging believers to recover their distinctiveness and spiritual authority. The sermon calls for a deep examination of personal and corporate lives to identify areas of compromise that hinder spiritual strength. Ultimately, the message is a clarion call for the Church to reclaim its heavenly position to prevail against worldly influences.

Transcript

"And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, when a land sinneth against Me by committing a trespass, and I stretch out mine hand upon it, and break the staff of the bread thereof, and send famine upon it, and cut off from it man and beast; though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God.... Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out My fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast: though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness" (Eze. 14:12-14, 19-20).

"Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of My sight, and let them go forth" (Jer. 15:1).

The situation in relation to which these Scriptures occur is indeed a desperate one; it is one of hopeless extremity. God is represented as stating that He Himself has come to the end of His human resources as far as the salvation of His people is concerned. He says that there is not a man who could avert the judgment which must come upon Israel. In such a state He says that if that averting WERE possible there were certain five men who could do it; and in mentioning the five by name - "Moses, Samuel" (Jer. 15:1). "Noah, Daniel, Job" (Eze. 14:12-14), He pinpoints that which those men signify which would prevail with

Him, if anything could do so.

We are therefore seeking to put our finger upon that particular feature and factor which God Himself indicates as having power with Him up to the last degree. We have considered Noah; now we move to the second in the order in Ezekiel - Daniel.

Incidentally, it is impressive that, with the acceptance of Ezekiel by Hebrew authorities for inclusion in the Old Testament Canon, they should have made such heavy weather over including Daniel. Only after much debate and controversy was Daniel admitted to a place in the Bible by those higher critics. The reasons for this attitude are full of interest, but not to be considered here. The point is that, as always, prejudice results in contradiction and inconsistency. Admit Ezekiel, yes, but overlook the fact that in Ezekiel God sets the very highest importance upon one whom you will not admit without a battle - Daniel.

From Noah To Daniel

It is a very far cry from Noah to Daniel. Noah stands in the book of beginnings - Genesis; Daniel stands so near the end of the Old Testament era. Are we straining the truth when we say that that fact really brings us to the very significance of Daniel as an ultimate factor in power with God? We must remember that when God speaks there are very deep and eternal thoughts beneath His words; they are SPIRITUAL thoughts. We have seen that with Noah the vast eternal and fundamental spiritual truth of the righteousness which is by faith was the power by which believers were delivered from universal judgment and secured a new, regenerate world. How far-reaching that truth is in the light of the New Testament 'Genesis' - the Letter to the Romans! If that is foundational and at the beginning, what is it that is ultimate as indicated by Daniel?

The book which bears his name may be regarded as a book of history and apocalypse; of prophecy, and history written in advance; but that is surely not the point made by God when He singled out Daniel as a man of pre-eminence in power with Him. No, we must think again.

We have to begin by reminding ourselves of why Daniel was in Babylon at all; that is, why the people of Israel were there. That brings us to the point that Daniel was physically and temporally - though not spiritually - involved in Israel's situation and condition. Was it not because Israel had forsaken their high and distinct position as God's 'Peculiar People'? All distinctiveness of life and testimony as "not reckoned among the nations" had been wholly violated and forsaken. They had become like Babylon before they were in Babylon. They were not only in the world, they had become of it. To this position and condition Daniel reacted with deliberation, positiveness, and faithfulness. His decision regarding the king's meat; his refusal to bow to the king's image; his persistence in rejecting the king's edict about praying to any other god; and his acceptance of the penalties of all this - in fellowship with his other three friends - was all related to one principle. From the lips of the king himself were forced words which precisely and concisely embodied that principle: "The heavens do rule". The inclusive truth of Daniel, in himself and in the effect of his life with God in secret (remembering that it is in the age of "the times of the Gentiles", that is, the era when the "kingdoms of this world" are in WORLD power), is that after all "the heavens do rule", and that any power with God over "the world rulers of this darkness" demands a heavenly position on the part of any vehicle of that power.

This means, as in the case of Daniel,

Absolute Spiritual Distinctiveness

of life and testimony, AT WHATEVER COST.

It may involve the lion's den, and there are many kinds of lions' dens. It may mean the fiery furnace, and there are many kinds of fiery furnace. It may be the fire of jealousy and spite on the part of men, as with David. In His great and spiritually instructive prayer (John 17) Jesus had VERY much to say about the world as THE enemy of His Church. How He prayed for the Church to be saved from the world; to abide in its "out of the world" position, and so be kept from the evil one. This kind of praying was based upon His immediately preceding words: "I have overcome the world", and this because (as seen throughout that Gospel) He Himself maintained His heavenly position.

It is therefore so impressive and significant that the Letter which speaks so forcefully about the Church's warfare with "world rulers" is the Letter which is based wholly upon the heavenly position of the Church. The measure of powerlessness in the Church, in preaching, in the prayer-life, in the testimony, within and without, will be determined by the measure of the "world" in the methods, means, behaviour, habits, accommodation, compromise, etc., in its members and corporate life.

This is an age of imitation of the world by the Church, and the power of the Church is pathetically small. If the Church were what it is really meant to be there would be neither need nor thought for imitating the world. We have to recover "the rule of the heavens" by recovering our heavenly position spiritually.

Daniel is a kind of summary of the Old Testament and a prophetic voice to the New. The one battleground of all the Old Testament is that of the heavenly distinctiveness of the people of God. That battle was lost in Israel, and the hopelessness of their position AS A WHOLE NATION (apart from the Remnant) at the end, with the desolating judgment of God, was on this one issue - compromise with the world! The Lord has thus thundered in history and through all the Prophets to warn His Church of the calamity of this lost distinctiveness through compromise with the world. The whole Gospel of John, his Letters, and the Letters of Paul make unmistakably clear three things:

One: there is a "Prince of this world"; a "Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience"; that "the whole world lieth in the wicked one", etc.

Two: that there is a spiritual realm where Christ is Lord, and not Satan, and where "the prince of this world (has been) cast out". Into that realm, by birth "FROM ABOVE", believers have been related and spiritually, inwardly, located, so that, as Jesus said: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

Three: there is a fierce and relentless warfare between the two realms and their two Lords. But THE point is this: Satan, for any success at all, must have his own ground. Therefore, to rob Christians and the Church of prevailing power, he MUST get Christians and the Church in some way, on some point or points, on to his own ground - this world.

Why did Daniel "determine" not to touch the provision from the king's table? Why did he and his friends refuse to have anything to do with the king's image? Why did he keep his prayer window open three times a day? It was all to avoid compromise with the world and its god, and to maintain his link with heaven. He knew that such was the secret of spiritual power, and he is the very personification of the law of power with God.

If we were DESPERATELY concerned about power with God in life and testimony, we should be stretched out to know by the Holy Spirit where "Achan" (Josh. 7:1) links, contacts and ground are in our lives,

sabotaging our spiritual strength. The Holy Spirit would very faithfully say: 'There, here, this, that!'

Power is a matter of position.

Have you noticed how dominant in Daniel is the phrase "The End" (11:27,35; 12:4,13)? This spiritual position to prevail is peculiarly characteristic of the end, and who shall say that it is not THE issue in our time? The Church is feverishly trying to recover power, but is it by SPIRITUAL POSITION?

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