

# Knowing and Serving the Lord in a Day of Crisis

by Tom Macartney

---

*The sermon explores the life of Daniel and his faith in God, highlighting key features of his life that demonstrate his commitment to God and his trust in God's sovereignty.*

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 2:30, Psalm 68:18, Jeremiah 25:11, Daniel 2:44, Matthew 6:33, Acts 17:6, Ephesians 4:8, Ephesians 6:10

**Topics:** "Faith And Courage", "Gods Sovereignty"

---

## Description

Tom Macartney preaches on the life of Daniel, who lived through a time of crisis during the exile in Babylon. Daniel's foundations were his personal knowledge of God and his unswerving loyalty to Him, even in the face of temptation and risk. His life was marked by experiencing the Lord's faithfulness, having courage of faith, commitment to fellowship, and a deep understanding of God's character and sovereignty. Daniel's spiritual stamina, wisdom, prayer life, and service exemplify a life lived in close fellowship with the Lord, standing firm in the midst of trials and challenges.

---

## Transcript

Daniel himself lived through such a time of crisis. At the time when he was deported to Babylon in 605 BC, Babylon had just conquered Assyria, defeated Egypt and become the dominant power in the Middle East. By the end of his long life, Babylon itself had been conquered by Persia. But more important, Daniel lived through one of the great crises in the history of Israel, its exile in Babylon and the return of a minority after 70 years. And still more important, as Daniel walked with God, the Lord revealed to him, in broad outline, the unfolding pattern of world history, culminating in the final crisis in its last chapter, with His church at the centre of that crisis. Now, we have good reason for believing that we are living in that last chapter, though we are uncertain of its length. The purpose of prophecy (and this study) is not to stimulate our curiosity as to the details of God's timetable, but to urge us on to greater whole-heartedness in seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33).

The foundations and chief features of Daniel's life

Before considering the background and immediate relevance to us of Daniel 11:32, let us first consider these foundations and features.

Daniel was taken to Babylon at the beginning of the 70 years' captivity prophesied by Jeremiah (25:11, 12; 29:10, 11). He was among the promising young men of royal or noble birth deported at the beginning of the exile. Ezekiel was taken captive in 597 BC, and the mass of the people in 586 BC, when the temple and Jerusalem were destroyed. Daniel was born about the time of Josiah's well-intended but ineffective reformation, and about 17 when deported. While we are told nothing specific about Daniel's family or upbringing, it would be safe to say he must have been influenced by Jeremiah as he grew up as the prophet pleaded with the people, warning them of the consequences of forsaking the living God, the fountain of living water (Jer. 2:13). So, we believe, Daniel came to know the living and true God personally as a youth and thus was prepared for the trauma of deportation from his family and comfortable home to Nebuchadnezzar's heathen court and able to stand for God in such surroundings. This was the first great foundation in his life, his personal knowledge of God.

The second was his unswerving loyalty to the God he had come to know. "The people who know their God, shall be strong and active for Him." Consider the situation in which he found himself (with his three friends). Nebuchadnezzar had arranged for the youths now being trained for his service (i.e. brainwashed into Babylonian ways) to receive a daily portion of fine food and wine from his royal table, food which Daniel knew would have been dedicated to his god. So, Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with this food and dishonour his God. Note how courteously he made his request of the official in charge, and how the Lord wonderfully honoured and overruled his stand; "Those who honour Me, I will honour" (1 Sam. 2:30). Note the risk he took; he was a captive under a tyrant with the power of life and death. Note the temptation to compromise; he was in a position of some promise, if only he was careful. He was only a young man; he had every reason to play safe. But Daniel remembered Jeremiah. The heart of holiness is loyalty to our great and gracious God, no compromise with anything which competes with this loyalty or is inconsistent with His nature and would grieve Him. Daniel's stand was part of God's new beginning at the outset of the exile. It is as if, as the darkness of the exile begins, God lights a candle in Daniel's heart. It seems such a small matter to make a stand over, but who knows what may flow from little loyalties in our little lives lived faithfully. Here he is a young man. In chapter 6, at the age of about 90, we find him just the same, uncompromisingly loyal to his God and prepared to face the den of lions. He might so easily have closed the windows of his room so that no one would know he was praying and giving thanks as usual, but he just carried on, with his windows open, knowing his enemies would be watching. This uncompromising loyalty, in things great and small, from youth to old age, is a major key to Daniel's life. It surely influenced his three friends and many others, and remains a challenge to us. We believe, say and sing that Jesus is Lord, but how far is it really true in our lives? Are we known for our unflinching, yet gracious, loyalty to Him in everything and in every situation? One most impressive feature of Daniel's long life is his experience of the Lord's sovereignty and faithfulness throughout it, in matters great and small. This was clearly true also for his three friends and must have been true for all with them in exile who were loyal to God. This has an encouraging message for us. In a book so full of great visions and events demonstrating God's complete sovereignty over kings and nations, it is good to be reminded that the whole of our (seemingly) little lives are also in His hands.

We see this in chapter 1 in verses 9 and 17. "Now God caused the chief official to show favour ... to Daniel," and gave them better health than the other young men. And "God gave them knowledge," so that their wisdom was ten times better than the best education which Babylon had to offer. (This does not mean, of course, that we should despise genuine learning, though without the Holy Spirit all knowledge must be of very limited value.) In chapter 3, Daniel's three friends found the Lord with them (perhaps personally) in the fiery furnace; what an experience! In chapter 6, the Lord sent His angel to protect Daniel

from the lions; what an experience at the age of 90!

As a result of their experience of the Lord's faithfulness sovereignly overruling their lives, we find in Daniel and his friends the courage of faith, complete confidence in the Lord. In 1:12, they are quite prepared to be tested, "Test your servants for ten days". They were quite sure in their hearts of the outcome. In 3:17, Daniel's three friends say, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and He will deliver us," adding, "But if not...", if He has other and better plans for us, we will still trust Him and not serve your gods. In Dan 6:10, we see this same courage of faith in Daniel (as we have noted) in keeping his windows open toward Jerusalem. He knew the Lord too well to doubt Him. Surely this is a challenge to us all. Do we know the Lord like this? We can for, "The people who know their God shall be strong," in faith. True faith is not merely agreeing mentally with true doctrine, it springs out of the discovery of the living God in actual, practical experience. Only such faith will see us through in a crisis.

Another important feature of Daniel's life is his committal to fellowship. In chapter 1, we meet him first with his three friends. In chapter 2, when their lives were under threat he goes home to them (it seems they lived together, 2:17), informs them of the crisis and they all make the matter one of urgent prayer. While Daniel was the spokesman it looks as if his three friends accompanied him when he stood before Nebuchadnezzar to make known and explain his dream (verses 36, 48, 49). He was clearly a fellowship man, and must surely have known many other believers in Babylon throughout his long life. For one thing, how was the book of Daniel preserved otherwise? Perhaps he had a group of friends meeting regularly for fellowship in his home. Why not? in the light of Nebuchadnezzar's high regard for Daniel and his friends (2:46-49; 3:28-30). He must surely have known of Ezekiel's ministry, some 50 miles from Babylon, which lasted for about 20 years from ca. 590-570 BC. Did they meet? One thing is certain; Daniel would have seized every opportunity of fellowship with those in whose hearts are the highways to Zion (Ps. 84:5).

It goes without saying that Daniel was a man of prayer and of the Word. We do not know what parts of the ancient Scriptures Daniel had heard, or learned, or had access to while growing up in Jerusalem, but we know that the book of the law of the Lord, given through Moses had been found in the temple during Josiah's reign, in ca. 621 BC, and had resulted in his reformation (2 Chronicles 34 and 35), so Daniel will have had at least some grounding in the Word. And he refers to the law of Moses and to the prophets in his prayer (9:10, 11, 13). And further, the books referred to in 9:2 must have included the relevant prophecies of Jeremiah concerning the exile. Clearly Daniel not only believed in fellowship, but made the utmost of every part of the Scriptures then available to him. What a rebuke to our culpable neglect of God's Word so readily available to us today. And it was his understanding of God's Word which drove him to the urgent prayer for the fulfilment of God's will for His people, in chapter 9.

Among the many notable features in this prayer is the depth of Daniel's knowledge of the Lord. He really knew the Lord. Consider his use of three of His great names, Elohim, Jehovah and Adonai, each name, with its own particular emphasis, being a revelation of the character and nature of God. "I set my face to the Lord God (Adonai Elohim) ... I prayed to the LORD my God (Jehovah my Elohim)"(verses 3 and 4). Elohim presents God as the supreme, transcendent Creator, dwelling in light unapproachable (1 Tim. 6:16). Jehovah presents the LORD as the great, eternal, unchanging 'I am', Who reveals Himself to us, comes to us and redeems us through His Son (John 1:18). Adonai presents the Lord as master and owner (a personal relationship). In the N.T. the Greek 'kurios' means Lord, His most frequent title. "You call Me teacher and Lord ... and so I am" (John 13:13). "Paul, a bond-slave of Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1:1). "You are not your own; you were bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

Consider also Daniel's clear understanding of God's character, "The great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him" (9:4), "Lord you are righteous" (9:7, 14, 16), "the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving" (9:9). Consider the ground of his appeal that the Lord would answer, "For His mercies' sake ... for His own Name's sake" alone (9:18, 19). What do we know of such prayer?

Consider also the titles of God found elsewhere in the book: the God of Heaven and the Most High God; the Lord of heaven and earth; the Lord of history, ruling the nations; the Lord who reveals His plans to His own ("To you it is given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven" Matt. 13:11), delivers those who trust Him, and is setting up His everlasting kingdom, never to be destroyed. One is reminded of Matt. 28:18, "All authority has been given to Me," and Phil. 2:9, "God has highly exalted Him."

Finally, let us note carefully Daniel's remarkable spiritual stamina, one of the things we greatly need today: "And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus", that is through the whole period of the exile of 70 years, 606-536 BC. Surely this is the greatest miracle in the book of Daniel. Of course, it is the burning fiery furnace, the den of lions, the writing on the wall, and the amazing visions, dreams and prophecies that spring first to our minds, for the supernatural always appeals to us. But we forget that this element is missing from the greater part of his life. With the possible exception of two undated chapters (one of which concerns his friends) the supernatural element is missing from some 60 years of his life, and all of his own visions and the den of lions occur at the end of his life when he was about 90 and the exile was approaching its end. So, as far as we are told, for the greater part of his long life nothing special or spectacular happened. Daniel simply walked with God, living in constant fellowship with Him in an evil world. What a witness! What stamina! What living proof of the grace and power of God to see His children and servants through the demands and pressures of everyday life: This is the greatest miracle in the book, and one in which we can all share!

The crises of history in the background of Daniel 11:32

Now we turn to the context of our verse to show its relevance for us today. Let us start with the heart of the matter. The first fulfilment of the immediate context relates to the time of the Maccabees when Antiochus Epiphanes tried to destroy the Jewish faith. We will give some details later. The final fulfilment relates to the attempt of Antichrist to dethrone God and destroy His church at the end of history. Comparing Daniel 11:31, Matt. 24:15 and 2 Thess. 2:3, 4, this central point becomes clear, but we must bear in mind that there is yet another intermediate fulfilment in the foreground in Matt. 24, namely the destruction of the temple by the Romans under Titus in 70 AD. A feature of prophecy is that there are partial, intermediate fulfilments of it which foreshadow and culminate in the final fulfilment. There have been many mini antichrists in history, and the spirit of the antichrist is ever present in this fallen world (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7).

So, the attack of Antiochus upon the Jewish remnant who had returned from Babylon to prepare the way (in God's plan, though they will not have realised it) for the first coming of His Son, foreshadows the assault of Antichrist upon the Church, whose readiness and completion is vital to His second coming. This heavily underlines the relevance of our verse, so that we need urgently to consider the enemy's tactics then, that we may be prepared now, for his methods are ever the same - he is always a liar and a murderer (John 8:44). This is the heart of the matter; this is the context of our verse. The history of Israel between the Testaments repays careful study. We can only attempt the briefest outline of essentials here. The enemy's first method of attack was infiltration, getting inside and among the people of God to deceive,

bring compromise and so weaken them. The second was to destroy them by direct persecution. Of the two, infiltration was the more dangerous by far.

Infiltration. When Alexander the Great (356-323 BC; the he-goat of Dan. 8), had conquered Persia, he set out to conquer the world, having not only a vision of military conquest, but of spreading Hellenism (a convenient name for Greek civilization, the Greek way of life). His empire was to be united by and in expressing this way of life, which he believed to be the best. Part of his plan was to establish Greek cities everywhere (with a temple to the Greek gods, a theatre, gymnasium, stadium, etc) from which the surrounding country could be influenced. (Note the Decapolis in the N.T.; Mark 7:31.) After Alexander's death, his empire fell to pieces into four parts (Dan. 8:8). Only two of these involved the Jews and need concern us; the dynasty of the Ptolemies in Egypt, and that of the Seleucids in Babylonia and Syria - these are the kingdoms of the South and North in Daniel 11. In the hot and cold war situation which developed between these two, Palestine became a kind of buffer-state torn between them, so that the Jewish remnant was caught up in world politics, where, to whichever side they belonged at any time, religious conformity and political reliability were all-important.

So, from the time of Alexander there was this subtle infiltration going on, with growing pressure on the Jews to conform to the world around them and to abandon their distinctive witness to the true God. Eventually, failure to conform led to persecution. It always does. Remember Daniel's friends. These tactics of infiltration were largely successful and the Jews were thrown into confusion, because: (i) the majority had not returned from exile to Jerusalem, their true centre as God's people in His plan. Some sought to remain true to the Lord in their compromised position, while others abandoned their heritage and blended in with the world around them; (ii) the minority who had returned were deeply divided in their attitude to Hellenism. The influential progressives (forerunners of the Sadducees) believed they should adapt to the modern world of their day. The loyalists (forerunners of the Pharisees) held that their separation from the world was vital to their vocation. Many were confused. Note, the younger generation found Hellenism, with its emphasis on the body and sport, very attractive.

So, we have an overall picture of confusion, division and weakness (together with a shameful situation in the high-priesthood) brought about by this infiltration of the spirit of this world, just as we have today, even in the believing church. Do we realise this? It is the subtlety of these tactics which has caught us unawares. Persecution is obvious and Christians in certain lands have known it even this century, but this infiltration of the church, especially in the West, has long been going on under our noses.

The Jewish remnant had been weakened in this way for over 150 years before persecution fell on them. To bring home to us the seriousness of this, we must briefly expand upon it. For the Jews the enemy was Hellenism. Today we call it humanism, which had its origins in the resurgence of Hellenism in the 15th and 16th centuries in the renaissance. In its early days humanism was not anti-God, but with its confidence in human nature it became more and more so. The N.T. calls this way of thinking and living, 'the world', as a summary of the way this fallen world of human beings thinks and operates, its spirit, ideas, ways and goals, and warns us against it (Rom. 12:2; 1 John 2:15-17). (We must not confuse this with the world, meaning the earth, or the human race.)

Humanism places man at the centre of everything, man's wisdom and reason, man's pleasure and glory, the civilised life, and so on. While lip-service may be paid to God and Christ-less religion may be tolerated, it is really the worship of man and the attempt by man to realise his glorious potential without God's Son. Can nothing then be said for Humanism as expressed in Western civilization? Is it not better to be civilised

than uncivilised, to live in an ordered society than in disorder?

Obviously it is in this life on earth. In so far as Humanism gives to the individual something of the place of value that God gives him (in contrast with the oppressive societies of the ancient (and modern world), and makes for order instead of chaos, well and good. But the great question of man's standing as a rebel and state as a sinner before God is ignored. The best that fallen man can produce in civilization only reveals man's potential as God's masterpiece in creation, but everything is flawed because he is a rebel at heart seeking to live his own life without God.

Created to be God-centred, he can never realise his destiny while trying to be his own god, however hard he tries. However, we must be careful not to overreact against everything human as some of the loyalists among the Jews did, so that in rejecting Hellenism they fell into legalism, exclusivism and fanaticism. The Scriptures and church history warn us against the perils of extremism as well as of compromise. Much of the tension among Christians over our attitude to the world springs from the difficulty of doing justice to two seemingly irreconcilable facts: (i) that man is a rebel against God and fatally flawed in everything he thinks and does, and (ii) that man was made in the image of God, and while that image is horribly marred, it has not yet been totally destroyed.

He is still therefore of value and can still reveal something of his high origin, while nevertheless belonging to the old creation under judgment. We must not confuse civilization and true Christianity (the faith of Jesus). Civilization is only a nice-looking veneer on the surface of the old creation. True Christianity is a new creation in which Christ is the centre and everything expresses Him. But how are we to identify this subtle infiltration of worldliness? As the Jews were, so Christians have long been confused and divided over this important issue (and the related issue of the church's commission in this world - how are we to have contact without compromise, for the sake of the gospel? For clarification, let us consider, (a) just one issue which lies at the heart of our problem, and (b) a few examples of infiltration.

(a) The whole N.T. makes a fundamental distinction between, (i) the truly born-again believer and the unbeliever (and professing Christian), and (ii) the church and the world (we refer to the true church, not Christendom with its national churches and others with mixed congregations). In the nature of things there can be no fellowship or union between light and darkness (2 Cor. 6:14-18). Any blurring of this issue inevitably provides ground for infiltration. Only eternity will reveal the tragic consequences of our ignoring or glossing over this distinction between the old and new creations.

(b) One example and test of our worldliness as Christians is, 'Where in our list of priorities does our standard of living come?' In this world, the 'good life' of comfort, pleasure and affluence takes high priority. What about us? Simple, sacrificial and self-denying living seems to be largely unknown today. In this we shame the One we profess to follow.

Another example is the place we give to man in the church. In the world the pursuit of position and power, the awarding of honours and the glorifying of men is a major feature. Has not this spirit infiltrated the church? Consider the praise and prominence given to leaders. Paul found this kind of thing at Corinth and would have none of it (1 Corinthians 3). In heaven only One Person is exalted, and it should be the same on earth. Note, "They saw no one, except Jesus only." Even Moses and Elijah had been withdrawn (Matt. 17:8).

Then there is the encouragement of self-centred self-expression (and the rejection of authority and discipline). Have not modern views on the upbringing of children, and the role of women, crept into the

church, together with much from current pop-culture? To encourage these trends is to contradict the Scriptures and counter the work of the Holy Spirit. But we must not confuse this kind of self-expression with being ourselves, our true selves in Christ, as God intends, which is quite another matter.

Another example is the infiltration of psychology (this world's substitute for salvation), with its techniques, so that people are helped to feel better through understanding and helping themselves, but not shown the real problem and their need of salvation. (We are not considering mental disorders.)

A useful guide in assessing this infiltration into our personal and church life is found in Rom. 11:36, "From Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things." These prepositions give us three searching questions to answer. (i) "From Him," indicates that He is (or should be) the origin or source of everything we do, and raises the question, 'Where did this idea or activity originate or come from? God or man? The Scriptures or tradition (we have always done it this way)? Was this born in prayer?' (ii) "Through Him," indicates the means by which something is done or carried on, and raises the question, 'How is this activity being carried through; in dependence on whom? God or man? Divine wisdom and strength, or human energy and resources? By genuine faith or human drive?' (iii) "To Him", indicates the goal, and raises the question, 'Who is getting the glory and satisfaction out of this activity or meeting? God or man? The Master or the servant? Those who gather or the One to whom they gather?'

Persecution. In the unfolding drama of the rivalry between the kings of the North and South, in which the Jews were caught up, we now come to Antiochus (king of the North in Dan. 11), who was a passionate champion of Hellenism. He is generally known as Antiochus Epiphanes for he claimed to be an incarnation of Zeus. Because of his political difficulties and the divisions between the Hellenists and loyalists among the Jews after generations of infiltration, he decided to stamp out the distinctive witness of the Jewish faith. This culminated in 167 BC in the placing of an altar to Zeus, the abomination of desolation, in the temple (Dan. 11:31). This led to the long struggle under the leadership of the Maccabees until the temple was cleansed in 164 BC. This was the immediate background of our verse and the first fulfilment of its context. Today we are approaching the final fulfilment under Antichrist. The infiltration of the church by the world is surely far advanced. The apostasy (or falling away) of Christians from the faith of Jesus, foretold in 2 Thess. 2:3 and 1 Tim.4:1. is upon us. The wearing out pressure upon the faithful is becoming more and more acute (Dan. 7:25). The political destabilising of the nations, the increasing inability of governments to govern, the rising tide of anarchy everywhere and the situation in the Middle East, are all painfully obvious. It only remains for the mystery of lawlessness to come to a head, and the lawless one, the antichrist, to be revealed - the great deceiver and destroyer, liar and murderer (2 Thess. 2:3, 7-9). The question is, 'Shall we be among the people who know their God and are strong and active for Him in such a day?' May the Lord enlighten and strengthen our hearts.

Serving the Lord calls for wisdom

Our verse, "But the people who know their God shall be strong and active for Him," is followed by, "And those who are wise (have spiritual understanding) among the people shall help many others understand." In times of crisis, the ministry of the wise is at a premium. It was so in Daniel's own day, and is here linked with our verse. It was in the critical days leading to David's coming into his kingdom, another major turning point in the history of God's people when some had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do (1 Chron. 12:32). It is today, as the coming of the Lord draws nearer.

One point needs immediate clarification. While this has an obvious application to teachers (as the RV mg. indicates), that is, men truly raised up by God to teach and explain His Word, the 'ordinary' Christian (of course, there is no such thing) is also called to be wise, that is, to have spiritual understanding. The serious error (which has bedevilled the church from earliest times) that in the church there is a class apart from the rank and file, who are trained specialists in spiritual things, and relegates the majority to the role of spectators, must be rejected. It has done incalculable damage.

When writing to the Ephesians, Paul indicates his prayerful concern that they may all be given "A spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of the Lord"(Eph. 1:17). In Matt. 11:25, the Lord Jesus said it was His Father's good pleasure to reveal His will to babes, the simple, and to hide it from the clever. So we may safely say that it is His will for all His children to have spiritual understanding, so that we may pray intelligently, serve Him effectively and know what is going on, in our generation (Acts 13:36).

So, let us look again at Daniel to learn something more of what this means.

1) Daniel understood the meaning of one of the most familiar passages in the N.T., Eph. 6:10-20, regarding the spiritual war in which we are engaged. Have we really understood this yet? We accept it in a general way, and dwell much upon the armour which God has provided, but tend to leave aside verse 12 as too difficult, even frightening; the verse that describes the spiritual forces of evil operating in the unseen world against us and the purposes of God. This was revealed to Daniel (chapter 10), this cosmic conflict, this great warfare, with the enemy of God and a hierarchy of evil under him, deceiving the nations, ever seeking to enslave the souls of men and to destroy the people of God, the saints of the Most High, his main target (7:18, 22, 25, 27).

While we must not become preoccupied with the enemy and his activities, as some are inclined to be, for we have a victorious Lord and must keep our eyes on Him, nevertheless we need to be watchful against the wiles of the devil, in our own lives, our local church fellowships and in the church at large. It is also vital we realise that, as Christians, we live on enemy territory (for Satan is still the prince of this world (John 14:30. 2 Cor. 4:4), though under God's sovereignty), and that we shall therefore be caught up in the tragedy of world events as history unfolds, as the people of God have always been. Have we grasped these things yet? We really are at war. Or has the enemy succeeded in infiltrating our lines to such an extent, that is, our thinking and approach to the Christian life, that we are effectively out of the battle, largely unaware of it, and satisfied with our own lukewarmness?

2) Daniel also understood the reason for and purpose of the exile, and when it would end, and set himself to work together with God for His purposes in it. Perhaps we may sum this up simply in this way: Israel needed to be delivered from idolatry (substitutes for God) in all its forms. Jeremiah summed this up in Jer. 2:13: "My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (Note how John concludes his first Letter, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols.") Before the exile the main enemy was idolatry, after it, compromise with the world. Daniel, like Ezekiel, was helping prepare the way for the return from exile, and so for the first coming of the Lord Jesus. He must have been widely known among the exiles and brought much encouragement to them. So, Daniel and Ezekiel played a vital part in the return of the remnant in 536 BC, even if, disappointingly, only circa 50,000 actually returned to Jerusalem. It was this weak and failing minority that provided a place to which the Lord of glory could come in the incarnation. What would He have done without them (humanly speaking)? But the challenge for us is this: we, as His church, are called to prepare the way for His second coming. In the mystery of His sovereign will, there is

a sense in which He cannot come again until His church is ready and complete. This will include, we might say, a continual spiritual return from a spiritual Babylon.

3) Daniel also had a firm grasp of God's sovereign will and purpose. (a) He understood God's absolute sovereignty over sin and all its consequences, over the devil and all his schemes, and over the rise and fall of the nations throughout human history: "The Most High rules in the kingdom of men" (Dan. 4:17, 25, 32). Generally, He chooses to exercise this sovereignty by overruling the free actions of men and the wiles of the devil, rather than by direct action. Following the writing on the wall, Belshazzar was not struck down; the Persians, unexpectedly, simply took Babylon that night and he was killed. The cross is, of course, the supreme example of this overruling. The wickedness of man and the malice of hell were overruled to accomplish God's supreme achievement (Acts 2:23, 24). Of course, He can (and sometimes does) act directly, e.g. the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24, 25; Luke 17:28-30), and the second coming of the Lord (1 Thess. 5:2, 3; 2 Thess. 1:7-9). Have we understood these things, or have we been brainwashed by a world that mocks the very idea of judgment?

(b) Further, he understood that, "The God of heaven was setting up a kingdom which would never be destroyed" (Dan. 2:44), that through all the tragedy and turmoil of history, the direct result of man's choice of independence, God was overruling everything and building His own eternal kingdom in responsive human hearts, that He was pursuing and achieving His goal through bitter conflict, and that, in N.T. language, one day the cry would go up: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15). The Lord Jesus said: "I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18), and we know that the church is the capital of His kingdom. Have we a firm grasp of these things? We shall need it to win through.

4) Daniel's knowledge of the Lord and understanding of His mind led to: (i) Real prayer. That means informed, intelligent cooperation with the Lord in the outworking of His will. This involves resolution, humility and self-abasement, exalting the Lord, and making His name and character the only ground of appeal (chapter 9). Such prayer is always answered and always costly. It was his praying that landed him in the den of lions. Such prayer is always 'toward Jerusalem' (Dan. 6:10; 9:16), which means for us the new and heavenly Jerusalem, the church and city of the living God, which is central to all God's purposes throughout eternity (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 21:2). These purposes go far beyond anything yet to be seen on this present earth when He returns to it.

(ii) Real service including: (a) The ability to help others on the basis of knowledge and experience gained in the school of life under the hand of God, which is so much more than our limited view of service, e.g. evangelistic outreach, important though this is. (b) The impact of our lives on others. Consider the impact Daniel and his friends had on Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, government circles and far beyond (Dan. 3:29; chapter 4; 6:25-27). Consider the impact of Paul and Silas in Thessalonica: "These who have turned the world upside down have come here also ... saying that there is another king, Jesus" (Acts 17:6, 7). People met the living God in and through His servants. What about us? How much impact does the church make today?

(iii) Spiritual Stamina. As we have already noted, Daniel continued for 70 years walking with God, till he was 90. We read in Isaiah 40:28-31 that those who look to the Lord shall walk and not faint. We would reverse the order of the last verse for we think that soaring on wings like eagles and running are harder and more important than walking, but the Lord knows the ultimate test is keeping on walking with Him in the challenge of ordinary life.

(iv) The way of the cross was for Daniel a way of life. Wherever we meet him, we find him walking the way of unswerving loyalty and sacrificial service, whether in his attitude to Nebuchadnezzar's fine fare in chapter 1, Belshazzar's promised rewards in chapter 5 (verses 16, 17), the plot against his life in chapter 6, or his response to the call to prayer in chapter 9 (verses 1-3). Why is the word and way of the cross (the costly side of following the Lord) largely missing today, in both teaching and practice, from its central place in the life of a Christian? Why our insistence on having the best of both worlds? Why must the younger generation so often be presented with a version of Christianity which is unworthy of the name and stands in flat contradiction to the whole N.T.? Daniel was under no illusions and neither were the saints of bygone generations. Is this yet another example of the way the church has been infiltrated by this self-centred, pleasure seeking world (Luke 9:23)?

(v) Close fellowship with the Lord. The cost meant nothing to Daniel, any more than it did to Paul (Philippians 3), because it brought him into the privilege of a close relationship with his Lord. In Dan.10:19, Daniel is addressed, "O man greatly beloved, fear not, peace be with you, be strong, yes, be strong." He is called greatly beloved (margin: very precious) three times (Dan. 9:23; 10:11). Daniel had a very close relationship with his Lord (open to all His children but known by few). He was clearly often overwhelmed by the situation and needed encouragement and strengthening. Then it was that the Lord drew near and said, "O man, greatly beloved." So it was with Paul also; in his last letter, facing execution, he wrote: "At my first defence no one took my part ... but the Lord stood by me and strengthened me" (2 Tim. 4:16, 17); and, we may safely say, spoke to his heart, "O man, greatly beloved." This is the high privilege of all who walk with the Lord in the way of the cross, sharing in the fellowship of His sufferings and the power of His resurrection (Phil. 3:10).

"But (in this time of crisis) the people who know their God shall be strong and active for Him. And those who are wise among the people shall help many others understand."

"Who is sufficient for these things? Our sufficiency is from God." 2 Cor. 2:16; 3:5

#### Postscript

If we had asked Daniel for a brief personal testimony at the end of his life, he might well have used words similar to those in Psalm 68:18-20:

"Praise be to the Lord, who daily bears our burdens, even the God who is our salvation. Our God is to us a God of deliverances; from Jehovah the Lord comes escape from death." (verses 19 and 20).

"When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive." (Psalm 68:18 as quoted in Eph. 4:8 about the ascension of Christ).

Daniel had known and proved the Lord as the God of the daily round, the ordinary and onerous duties of life, the Lord who daily bears our burdens. Daniel had also known and proved the Lord as the God of the tight corner, a God of deliverances. And he had literally known escape from death through the Lord's intervention. But more than this, he had glimpsed the glory of the day of resurrection, that death itself was only an escape from death into His presence (Dan. 12:13). And, like Isaiah (Isaiah 6; John 12:41), and Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:26), Daniel had glimpsed the victory and glory of the ascended Lord Jesus (without fully understanding, of course; Dan. 7:13, 14), and lived his life in the power of that vision. We too may know and prove the Lord like this.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/tom-macartney/knowning-and-serving-the-lord-in-a-day-of-crisis/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**