

A Man of Discipline

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of standing true to God's word and not compromising with the world, as exemplified by the life of Daniel.

Duration: 1:01:55

Scripture: Isaiah 58:4-5, Isaiah 58:8-9, Isaiah 58:11-12, Daniel 9:4

Topics: "Discipline"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of fasting and the type of fast that God desires. He emphasizes that God is not pleased with a fast that is only outwardly observed, but rather desires a fast that leads to actions of justice and compassion. The preacher also highlights the importance of not pointing fingers at others and instead focusing on personal repentance and obedience to God's commandments. The sermon draws inspiration from the book of Daniel, where the prophet Daniel demonstrates true repentance and seeks God's forgiveness for the sins of his people.

Transcript

Heavenly Father, we pray that your word will become living and powerful to us as we study it this morning. Give us an anointing, give us grace, give us understanding of your will and your ways. Lord, we pray for a moving of your Holy Spirit, we pray for a prophetic word that will prepare us for the days to come.

Hear us, Heavenly Father, in Jesus' name. We ask that you will be exalted and your word will find an application in each of our hearts. In Jesus' name.

I want to turn to the book of Daniel and chapter one. Some time ago we had one of our conferences, we had a drama on Daniel called Standing True to God in a Day of Compromise. And I want to share a few things along that line in these three morning Bible studies about what it means to stand true to God in the time in which we live.

And I believe that the book of Daniel is one book in the Old Testament that can give us some encouragement to prepare us for the coming days. There are many lessons that we can learn there. So what we're going to do is look through the whole book--not the whole book, really, but the main points which are applicable to our time.

You see, Daniel's got two sections. The first six chapters are more like history, and the next six chapters are all prophecy. So we're not going to go more into that prophetic section.

We're going to deal more with the principles that we can learn, which made Daniel such a crucial and important person in God's plan for his people at that particular time. Now, first of all, I want to give you a little bit of a background. See, after Israel came out of Egypt, they established themselves in the land of Canaan.

You read in the book of Joshua. And then soon after Joshua and the next generation died, as usually happens by the end of the second generation of any movement, decline comes in. And decline came in.

And you read in the book of Judges, exactly like in Christian history, decline, and occasionally there's a revival and again decline. And then we read of a time of revival in the time of Samuel and David, which is about maybe 450 years after they came into the land of Canaan. And then again you have the second generation after David.

Decline sets in with Solomon. And by the time you come to Rehoboam, the third generation, there's a split. And the nation of Israel was divided into two, exactly like great movements in history, Christian history.

Starts off with a man of God who starts something like David. Next generation, Solomon, decline comes in. And third generation, there's a split.

It's happened everywhere. And the kingdom of Israel split into two kingdoms, and ten nations formed a nation called Israel, and two nations formed a nation called Judah in the south. And about 300 years later, the northern kingdom of Israel with ten tribes declined into idolatry, and God sent the Assyrian nation, which was the world's top superpower at that time, to occupy Israel.

They established their capital in Samaria. And that's how you had these Assyrian Jewish mixed people in Samaria, who even in Jesus' time, they would not have anything to do with the Samaritans, because Samaritans were not pure Jews. From 700 years before Christ, they got mixed with the Assyrians.

That's why the Jews looked down on the Samaritans. And then, but the southern kingdom of Judah was still going on. Somewhat faithful, they had some good kings like Hezekiah and others.

And God sent many prophets. The last of the prophets was Jeremiah, just before Daniel's time. And this southern kingdom of Judah survived for another hundred years after Assyria had occupied Israel.

Now, all this is in the Old Testament, everything I'm saying. It's not from any other book. If you read the Old Testament, you would know it.

But there is a verse in 2 Chronicles chapter 36 which tells us how the southern kingdom of Judah treated God's prophets. In 2 Chronicles chapter 36 and verse 16, it says that the southern kingdom of Judah did not learn lessons from what happened in Israel. And many times God said to the southern kingdom of Judah, please see what happened to your northern sister Israel and learn some lesson from that.

But they would not learn. Just like today, you have often heard me say we must learn from the mistakes of others. I don't know how many of you learned from the mistakes of others.

Let me give you my personal testimony. Wherever I have seen a person fall or a movement fail, I have carefully tried to study to the best of my ability why it happened, not to judge them, but to learn lessons for

myself. And that has helped me tremendously.

Many of you fail because you don't learn lessons from the failures of others. A foolish man learns nothing from the failures of others, and so he keeps failing himself. You need not fail if you learn lessons from the failures of others.

When somebody trips up, a movement trips up, ask yourself why. Take some effort to find out, and that will save you from the same failure. That's exactly what God told the southern kingdom of Judah through Jeremiah.

Please learn something from what happened to the northern kingdom. They would not learn. 2 Chronicles 36 verse 15 says, The Lord God of their father sent word to them again and again by his messengers because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place.

But they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised his words, scoffed at his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, until there was no remedy. See, God kept on sending his prophets, speaking, speaking, speaking, speaking, one prophet after another. They would not listen.

Jeremiah was the last one. And finally God said, Okay, now there is no cure. You know, like a disease.

The doctor gives him an antibiotic. The fellow doesn't take it. It gets worse.

Then he comes back for treatment and some other stronger antibiotic. He doesn't take it. Finally, this fellow has neglected treatment again and again and again.

Finally, there was no cure. And yet the patient has to die. And that's exactly what happened to Judah, that there was no remedy.

Therefore, God brought against them the king of the Chaldeans, who slew their young men with his sword in the house of their sanctuary, had no compassion on young man or virgin old man or infirm. He gave them all into his hand, and all the articles of the house of God, great and small treasures, were taken all to Babylon. They burned the house of God and broke down the wall and so on.

And those who had escaped from the sword, verse 20, he carried away to Babylon, and they were servants to him. Among this group was Daniel, taken to be a servant in Babylon to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah until the land had enjoyed its Sabbath. All the days of its desolation, it kept Sabbath until 70 years were complete.

I don't have the time to show you this, but during that period, from the time of the entering Canaan to this period, which is about 590 B.C., during that period, they were supposed to keep the Sabbath for the land. God said, six years, you still the land, and the seventh year, leave the land without being tilled. Give a Sabbath to the land.

Don't till anything. Don't sow anything. And in the sixth year, I'll give you double, triple, so that you'll have more than enough for the seventh year and even for the eighth year.

But you know how covetous people are. They got that triple in the sixth year, and then they still tilled the land in the seventh year for 490 years. 490 years, they were supposed to keep this land untilled for 70 years.

They did not listen. God said, okay, I'll teach you a lesson. I'll send you into captivity into Babylon for 70 years and make sure the land is not tilled for 70 years.

God is very exact. You reap exactly what you sow. If you try to fool God and try to escape one way, you'll get it another way.

You cannot escape God. I always tell people, if you don't settle matters here, you'll have to settle it at the judgment seat of Christ. If you don't apologize now, God will make you apologize at the judgment seat of Christ to your eternal loss.

If you don't settle matters now, you'll have to settle it there. You are never going to escape permanently. Nothing.

Nothing. It's much better to settle matters now. And that's one thing that Judah never understood.

And that was the reason for the captivity, why Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, was sent by God to punish Judah, the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, the two tribes of the southern kingdom. Let's turn now to the book of Daniel. That's a little bit of background you've understood now.

We read here in Daniel chapter one. Now, there are two words, two phrases or two expressions that I want you to notice in the book of Daniel. First of all, this expression, the Lord gave, chapter one, verse two, the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, along with all the vessels of gold in the house of God.

That's what we read earlier. The Lord gave, verse nine, God gave Daniel favor in the eyes of the commander. Verse seventeen, God gave these youths knowledge and intelligence.

And many times later in the book of Daniel chapter two also, God gave them revelation and so on. This is the first thing which I want you to see. The sovereign ruling authority and power of God that gives us favor, like he gave Daniel favor in the eyes of authorities, that gives God's people judgment because they play the fool with him.

He sent Babylon to punish Judah because Judah was corrupt. And God can send persecution upon the church because the church is corrupt and because the church will not listen to the prophets that God sent. But it is the sovereignty of God.

It was God who sent Nebuchadnezzar. We think it is not God who can send Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar is a wicked, evil king, godless man.

Can God send such people? Can God send people to persecute the church, heathen people? Why not? He does it even today. Because the church will not listen to the prophets, okay? Then you got to listen to your enemies. I once had to tell someone who got into trouble.

I said, if you had listened to the elders, you would not be dealing with the police today. God uses the elders first. You don't listen to the elders, then you deal with the police.

So God always warns his people through the prophets first. There were very few prophets in Judah, and there are very few prophets throughout the world. But God never leaves his church without a witness in any generation.

He always raises up prophetic voices to warn the church. But like we see around us, very few people take heed to those voices. And when they don't hear those voices, then they have to be punished.

We are living in a very critical time in India. And I believe God is saying things to the church, and I don't think most people in the church are willing to listen. Like it says in 2 Chronicles 36, they mock the prophets, they despise them, they treat them badly.

And one day God says, okay, no more. You won't have any more prophetic voices, and now I'm going to judge you. So the sovereignty of God in allowing persecution, the sovereignty of God in giving His remnant people like Daniel favor in the eyes of the authorities, the sovereignty of God in permitting His servants to be killed, the sovereignty of God in saving His servants from death, all these things.

The sovereignty of God is a great theme in the book of Daniel, and we must be gripped by that in our time. The second thing I want you to notice is in Daniel 1, verse 8, where it says, Daniel would not defile himself. He made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food.

Now Daniel was a man who was an overcomer. He kept himself from compromise. He disciplined himself.

He did not violate the standards of God's word in a country where people didn't have any standards. This is not Judah, this is not Israel, this is Babylon. And in Babylon, when Daniel was told, was offered all this fancy food, special food from the king's table, very mouth-watering and appetizing, but forbidden by God in the book of Leviticus, wine that they were not supposed to look at according to Proverbs, and forbidden meats, pork, and things like that that were forbidden in Leviticus.

All the others around him ate. Daniel said no. That's the second thing, that in this time God needs people who will stand true to His word, even when everyone around them compromises.

Small things. Later on you find Daniel's three friends, who stand upright when all the other Jews say, well, bow your head a little, you'll lose your life. He said, never mind if I lose my life, but those three people said, no, we're not going to bow down.

Right through the book of Daniel from chapter one you find this Daniel determined in his heart, Daniel 1.8. He made up his mind. And I believe God needs people today who will make up their mind to obey the word of God right from their youth. Daniel was probably only 17 years old.

17 years old, younger than almost everybody here. But he made up his mind that he would not compromise. I believe God lays hold of young people like Joseph, like Daniel, like David.

He lays hold of young people and he sees whether they will not compromise. Many of you he laid hold of when you were young with a purpose, with a purpose that you would live for him and stand for him and be a light and a voice for him in a decaying, compromising Christendom. Whether he has succeeded in what he wanted to do in your life, I don't know.

But it depends on you are willing to stand true to God and whether you're willing to obey God's word when everybody around you is disobeying. Not in a rebellious type of way, not in an arrogant, proud way, in a very humble way. Daniel did not judge the others.

That was not his business. He said, I am not going to do it. He was the only person.

And when he took a stand, it says here that these three others, first it was Daniel alone. It doesn't say four people made up their mind in verse eight. It was one.

And when he took a stand, three others, verse eleven, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, they also joined him and said, we are not going to eat either. And wherever God can find a Daniel, there will always be Hananiahs and Mishaels and Azariahs to join him. There are many Hananiahs, Mishaels and Azariahs in India, but we can't find them until God can find a Daniel.

Because these Hananiahs, Mishaels and Azariahs are people who do not have the courage to stand on their own. But they're willing to stand if they find somebody else who is willing to take a stand. So how to find the Hananiahs, Mishaels and Azariahs? They can be found only if you get a Daniel.

So you can have thousands of Hananiahs, Mishaels and Azariahs and they'll all become compromisers unless God finds a Daniel. But if he finds a Daniel, then these thousand people will come out. There'll be a church of a thousand people.

But if God doesn't find a Daniel, then these thousand people will be compromisers. So you know who God is looking for? He's not looking for Hananiahs, Mishaels and Azariahs, there are plenty of them. He's looking for Daniels.

And who are the Daniels? The ones who are willing to stand all alone. You see, it doesn't make a slightest difference to me whether my wife stands with me, whether what my relatives think, what my neighbors think, what other Christians think. This is the standard of God's Word.

And I'm talking about the main principles of God's Word. I'm not talking about standing up for stupid things like not celebrating Christmas or removing ornaments. I'm not talking about this type of Paris-sake legalism that is found among some of our people who are occupied with trivialities.

Daniel was not occupied with trivialities. Don't think that standing for those type of things is what I'm talking about. Far from it.

That will take you to the other end of Parisism and legalism. I'm talking about standing for those eternal principles of God's Word. Standing as a witness for God, as a light, not compromising morally, not compromising God's standards.

And also standing against legalism and Phariseeism, just as much as we stand against adultery and murder and immorality and anger and lusting with the eyes, to stand just as much against what Jesus stood against--hypocrisy, unbelief, selfishness, spiritual pride. All these things, just as important. And you can't stand against them if you have not stood against them in your own life first.

Notice, in all the--I want you to notice something here, which comes frequently in the Bible. Some of the great issues in the Bible revolved around food. The first temptation that came to Eve was in relation to food.

Daniel determined not to defile himself in the area of food. Jesus' first temptation in the wilderness, turned these stones into bread, was in relation to food. What was the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah? We will immediately say, immorality, homosexuality, how did it start? Ezekiel 16 and verse 49 says, This was the guilt of your sister Sodom.

Ezekiel 16, 49. She and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food, careless ease, and she did not help the poor and needy. No mention of immorality, no mention of murder, no mention of violence, even though these things were there.

What was it? Pride, pride, plenty of food, comfortable life, and not caring for needy people around them. Listen to this. Pride, plenty of good food, comfortable life, and not caring for the needy people around them.

Do you think Christians can be like that? I think most Christians are like that. Pride, plenty of good food, comfortable life, and not caring for the needy around them, but plenty of conferences and meetings and everything else. See what Jesus said in Luke's gospel about Sodom.

Luke chapter 17 and verse 28. It was the same. He's talking about the second coming.

Verse 24. Just as the lightning when it flashes out from one part shines to the other part, so will the son of man be in his day. Verse 26.

As it happened in the days of Noah. What is the main sin in the days of Noah? You say sex and violence. Hang on.

Why did that sexual sin and violence come? Because, verse 27, they were eating and drinking. You see how Jesus emphasized eating and drinking. What about Sodom? Verse 28.

It was the same. It happened in the days of Lot. They were eating and drinking.

What's wrong with eating and drinking? Let me show you another verse. Philippians 3. It speaks about certain people who are the enemies of the cross of Christ. Philippians 3 verse 17.

Brethren, join in following my example. Paul said, follow my example. He never said, don't look at me.

I'm not a good Christian. Look at Jesus. He never said that.

He said, follow my example. See how I live. See my attitude to money.

See my attitude to everything. See how I live. Observe those who walk according to this pattern.

Because there are many who walk, about whom I have often told you, and now I'm telling you even weeping, they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction. There are certain people who says they are enemies of the cross of Christ and their end is destruction. Okay.

What is the number one characteristic of these enemies of the cross of Christ? Please listen. Their God is their stomach. Do you believe that a man whose God is his stomach is an enemy of the cross of Christ? A man who loves good food? Eve is tempted by food.

Daniel took a stand in the area of food. Jesus was tempted in the area of food. In the days of Noah and Lot, they were eating and drinking.

And here we read, the enemies of the cross of Christ are the ones whose appetite is their God. There are many appetites in our body. Appetite for food, for sex, all legitimate.

God only created them. But when these things become our God... When does food become your God? When you are disturbed if the food is not up to the mark. You can be upset in a conference because the food is not up to the mark.

You can be upset with your wife because food is not up to the mark. You want to stand for God in the last days? Be a man who has conquered the power of food over your body. And one way to conquer it is by fasting.

That's the way to conquer it. I want you to turn back to Daniel. Now I'm talking about if you are really serious about standing for God in these days.

Before you turn to Daniel, let me turn to 1 Corinthians 9. 1 Corinthians 9, Paul says, he says some amazing words, the last sentence in 1 Corinthians 9, 27. He says, I am afraid lest, after having preached to other people, I myself should be disqualified. Is it possible for a man like Paul, who has raised the dead, established churches, written scripture, preached to others, stood true to God for so many years, is it possible for such a man to be disqualified? Yes.

He feared it. That's why he never got disqualified. That's why he could say at the end of his life, I have fought a good fight.

I finished my course. I've kept the faith. But what did he do to prevent himself from being disqualified? That's the important thing.

Many of us are preaching to so many people, saying we have got the truth and all that. How do you know you won't be disqualified? Well, if you do this thing which Paul did, then you will not be disqualified. Verse 27, like an athlete, I am reading from the Living Bible, like an athlete, I punish my body, treating it roughly, training my body to do what it should do, not what it wants to do.

My body wants to do many things, but Paul says, I buffet my body and I make it do what it should do. What were they doing in the days of Noah? Eating and drinking. What were they doing in the days of Lot? Eating and drinking.

What was the result in the days of Noah? Sexual sin. What was the result in the days of Lot? Sexual sin. What do today's Christians do? Eating and drinking.

What is their main problem? Lusting with the eyes. Sexual sin. They cannot overcome it.

There is a very close connection between loving good food and loving a comfortable life, and not being able to overcome the lust of the eyes, and not being able to overcome immorality. Start with that which is easy. Lusting with the eyes is a difficult thing to overcome.

Start with fasting. That is my recommendation. It's possible that some of you have never fasted even once in your whole life.

Do you know what Jesus said? In Luke's Gospel, Chapter 5, He said, Luke's Gospel, Chapter 5, verse 33. The disciples of the Pharisees came to Jesus, Luke 5, 33, and said, The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers. The disciples of the Pharisees also fast.

But yours, your disciples, eat and drink. And look at their complaint. John the Baptist, okay, he's a great man, his disciples are fasting.

Even the Pharisees, okay, they are religious people, they are fasting, and he says, your people are just eating and drinking. The Muslims fast, the Buddhists fast, the Hindus fast. But, say, the Christians, they are eating and drinking.

I'm here with them. I'm the bridegroom. In the middle of a wedding you don't have fast.

Have you ever heard of a wedding fast? We hear of a wedding feast, not a wedding fast. He says, right now the bridegroom is here. So, you can't make the people fast in a wedding.

Bridegroom is here, but, now listen, the days will come, and that happened when Jesus ascended to heaven, when the bridegroom will be taken away from them. And then what will they do? Listen to these three words. They will fast.

You read those words? When the bridegroom is taken away, they will fast. Have you done it? I tell you, it's unfortunate. We have two extremes in Christendom in this matter of fasting.

There is only one, here is one command, not a command, it is something he stated. But there is one command that Jesus gave about fasting in Matthew chapter 6. He said, when you fast, don't let anybody know about it. Anoint your face and let people never know that you fast.

What I have seen in Christendom in forty years is this. We have one group of people who never fast, and another group of people who are always advertising their fasting. Isn't it pathetic that these are the only two groups in Christendom? Shall we raise up a third group who fasts and never tells people about it? Why should there only be two groups in Christendom, one who never fasts and one who always advertises their fasting? I have not seen a third group.

There are a few individuals. Most churches that I have come across, they either don't fast at all or they advertise their fasting. It is pathetic.

And both groups are useless to God because the moment, if you don't fast, of course you lose something. If you advertise your fasting, Jesus said, you have already got your reward. You have already got your reward.

That is the way the devil ensures that God never does anything as a result of your fasting, because you have already got your reward. And God will do nothing for such a person. So both groups, God does nothing.

One because they fast and the other group because they advertise their fast. Now I want to encourage you not to join either of these groups, but to be like Jesus and do what Jesus said. Okay, now we want to turn back to Daniel.

He took a stand in the area of food. It's not because he didn't like good food. It's not because his stomach did not, it's not because his mouth did not water when he saw those things.

His mouth watered, but he said, No, I'm not going to eat it because God has said so. But this man went on from there. We read in Daniel chapter 9. Now in Daniel chapter 1, we read of what Daniel did when he was 17 years old.

Now in Daniel chapter 9, I want you to see what Daniel did when he was 87 years old. Seventy years later, in Daniel chapter 9, he came along with Nebuchadnezzar. Seventy years judgment was over.

Now he was 87 years old. Daniel chapter 9, Nebuchadnezzar is all dead and gone. The Babylonian Empire is finished.

A new empire called the Medo-Persian Empire headed by Darius is now ruling. Chapter 9, verse 1, in the first year of Darius, I, Daniel, verse 2, read in the scriptures the number of years which Jeremiah had said that Jerusalem will be in captivity. Seventy years.

And he realized the 70 years was over. I was 17 when I left. Now I'm 87.

The 70 years are over according to the scriptures. Now God should take his people back from Babylon to Jerusalem. What did he do? When he realized that that is what scripture said, he didn't say, Oh well, that's wonderful.

Let's sit back and let's praise the Lord. God will do His work. He did not do that.

Whenever there has to be a movement from Babylon to Jerusalem, God has to find a Daniel who will initiate that movement. See, today also, Christianity is generally speaking in Babylon. The Babylon spoken of in Revelation 17 and 18.

A religious Christendom full of rituals and messages and conferences, but without divine life, without a supernatural anointing from God, without a prophetic word, and where human methods and business principles are important, and where money is a very, very important factor. You read Revelation 18, it's all about money. Money, money, money, money, money.

Revelation 18. And you look at a lot of Christian groups today, it's all money, money, money, money, money, money. It's the main thing in their program.

This is Babylon. Money is their God. But they talk about Jesus as their God.

And then in Revelation 20 and 21, you read about... 21 and 22, rather, you read about Jerusalem. That's the true church. So, in the Old Testament, when you see this movement of God's people back from Babylon to Jerusalem, it's a picture of today, God's people moving out of Babylon into the true church of Jesus Christ.

Persecuted, ridiculed, mocked, but standing true to God in the day of compromise. And how did it start? It started with a man called Daniel, who did three or four things. One, he studied the word of God.

It says here, he observed, he studied, in the books of Jeremiah the prophet. God can never use a man to move people from Babylon to Jerusalem if he's not a student of the word of God. Number one.

Please remember this. He cannot. I don't care how wholehearted you are, if you're not a student of God's word.

This man studied God's word when he was seventeen. He studied God's word when he was eighty-seven. What an example.

The other thing is, he gave his attention to the Lord to seek Him by prayer and supplication with fasting. He fasted when he was seventeen. He's fasting when he's eighty-seven.

He hasn't changed his habits in seventy years. He's eighty-seven years old and he's fasting. Why? Is it for something for himself? Lot of people fast when they want something.

Oh Lord, my children are gone astray, I'm fasting. Okay, that's good. But Daniel didn't have any children who were gone astray.

He was fasting for God's program to be fulfilled. God needs a few people like that, who are fasting for the glorifying of God, Jesus' name in India, who are fasting for the building of the church in India, who are fasting for people to move out of Babylon and build Jerusalem. He was a man of self-denial.

He was a man who disciplined his body. He was a man who would tell his body what to do. He was a man who told his body to get up out of bed now, don't be so lazy, get up and read the Bible and study it.

Not the body says, oh, no, no, no, you need a little more sleep, okay, sleep. No time. He said, brother, what to do, we're so busy, we have no time to read the Bible.

Well, you can drift along with all the other compromisers, but God will still have a few Daniels in India, I believe that. People who study the scriptures, who discipline their bodies, they may not have time to watch even the news on television, they may not have time to even perhaps go for choir practice, but they will study the Word. They may not have time to perfect their musical abilities, but they will study the Word.

They will discipline their bodies. They want to count for God. And they know that God's purposes are not going to be furthered by mere music or by TV news or any such thing.

They know God's purposes are going to be furthered by fasting and prayer and the study of the Word. And Daniel gave attention to it, it says, I gave my attention to the Lord God. I prayed, I fasted, I wore sackcloth, I sprinkled ashes upon myself, and I confessed the sins of my people.

He said, O Lord, You are a great and awesome God, but we have sinned, we have committed iniquity, we have acted wickedly, we have rebelled, we have turned aside from Thy commandments and ordinances, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets. Righteousness, verse 7, belongs to You, Lord, but to us, open shame. O Lord, verse 8, open shame belongs to us.

Lord, we have rebelled, verse 9. Verse 10, we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord. All Israel, verse 11, has transgressed the law, and You have confirmed what You have done by judging us. Therefore, Lord, You brought, verse 14, this calamity upon us.

Now, Lord, please, You brought us out of Egypt, verse 15. In accordance with Your righteous acts, You let Your anger turn away, verse 16, from Jerusalem because of our sins, our iniquities, verse 16. Please listen, verse 17, O God, to the prayer of Your servants.

Please incline Your ear, O my God, verse 18. See the desolations of Your city, and we are not presenting our supplications because of any merit of our own, but on account of Your great compassion. Verse 19, O Lord, hear, O Lord, forgive, O Lord, listen, O Lord, take action, not for my sake.

Look at this man, 70 years of faithfulness, of discipline, of fasting, of standing true to God, and at the end of 70 years, he says, Lord, I am not worthy. Not because of my 70 years of faithfulness. Lord, I am a sinner.

That's the mark of a man who stands for God in the last days. He judges himself. He may be the most faithful man on earth, faithful for 70 years, he judges himself.

That's why when I see a young man judging others, I say, there is no hope for him. When I see young people judging their elders, I say, there is no hope for them, absolutely none. God has to look for somebody else.

God has to look for people who judge themselves. Do you think Daniel was a sinner? He was the most upright, most uncompromising man that lived in that time. Let me show you something.

In Daniel's time, there was another prophet in Babylon, whose name was Ezekiel. Ezekiel must have been at least 10 years older than Daniel. And I want you to turn to this verse in Ezekiel, in chapter 14.

Now remember, this is Ezekiel, 10 years older than Daniel. Let's say Daniel is 20 years old and Ezekiel is 30 years old. Okay? And Ezekiel is prophesying, Thus says the Lord, Ezekiel 14, 12.

The word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, if a country sins against me by committing unfaithfulness, and I stretch out my hand and judge it, even though there are three men there, Noah, who is dead, Daniel, who is alive, 20-year-old young man, and Job, who died years ago, these three men, they will only deliver themselves by their righteousness. Can you imagine God praising a young 20-year-old man in his lifetime through another prophet, who is older than him? Noah is dead and gone. There is no danger of his becoming spiritually proud by Ezekiel referring to him.

Job is dead and gone. There is no danger of his becoming spiritually proud. But Daniel, the fellow is alive.

And the fellow is hardly 25 years old. That was God's opinion of that young man. Not only was he righteous, God could use his name in linking him up with Noah and Job, and know that that fellow will not get puffed up.

He didn't get puffed up. He continued to the age of 87 and 90, faithful to God. This is the man whom God thought so highly of, who says in Daniel chapter 9, O God, it's only shame that belongs to me.

It's only iniquity. We have sinned. He doesn't say they have sinned.

He doesn't say those ungodly people. He says we. We, we, we, we, we.

This is the language of a godly man. What is the language of ungodly legalist? That man, that elder brother is not like this. That other person is like this.

There is no hope for such people. Absolutely no hope. God is looking for Daniel.

People who fast and pray. People who discipline themselves. And who don't talk about it.

And who stand true to God. Who don't find fault with others, but who judge themselves. That's why lot of us are disqualified.

We don't fast, we judge other people, and we don't study the word of God. Where in the world? You can listen to this message and go away. But if you don't change in these three areas, I want to tell you, I don't care how zealous you are, you are useless to God in this particular time.

You want to change? Let me tell you the areas where you must change starting today. Be a student of the word of God. Deeply, number one.

Second, discipline your body. Fast. Start with fasting one meal.

Second, start with fasting one day. Go on to two days, go on to three days. Fast and seek God.

And most important, most, most important, don't tell anybody about it. Your family members will naturally know, but don't tell anybody else. I'm talking about those who are serious about living for God in this time.

And stop judging others. This is probably going to be more difficult than fasting. Can you fast from your opinion of other people? That is more difficult than fasting from food.

Try fasting from passing your opinion for 24 hours. You'll find it very difficult. Try fasting for the rest of this conference from passing your opinion.

You'll find it very difficult. Very difficult. You may be able to skip the lunch meal, but you'll find it very difficult to fast from giving your opinion.

That is one of the main reasons why I want to say to you, you are useless to God despite all your zeal. Daniel said, Lord, this man who was so faithful that God Himself could commend him openly when he was a young man, this man in whose mouth was the anointed word of God, he said, open shame belongs to me, Lord. Where am I, Lord? I'm nothing.

Eighty-seven years old, he said, O God, I'm nothing. Have mercy, let your Jerusalem be built, let your church be built. Where does God find people like that? Where does God find people like that who are faithful year after year after year after year after year? They become eighty-seven years old and they're still faithful, going strong.

There are those young fellows in Babylon, grown up, younger than Daniel. Not one of them has the zeal or the faithfulness or the discipline or the study of the word that this old man Daniel has got. That's the condition of Christendom in India today.

The devil has deceived people. He has deceived even people sitting in our midst who have heard so much, who have understood so much. What a tragedy! What a tragedy! And if the devil can deceive people in our midst in these areas, can you imagine what is the hope for other people? It says in Daniel chapter six that he used to open his windows towards Jerusalem.

Verse Daniel 6.10. Now Daniel knew the document was signed and he entered into his house and his room. He had his windows. He continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God.

Eighty-seven years old, the fellow is still on his knees. Three times a day, opening his window towards Jerusalem and praying for Jerusalem like he had prayed for seventy years. You see, this was the womb in which the baby was born.

You know that for a baby to be born, it needs a womb. It needs a mother. Why can't a man have a baby? Because a man doesn't have a womb.

And prayer and fasting are the womb in which a movement is born that leads God's people from Babylon to Jerusalem. And if you don't have that womb, how can you have the baby? Can a man have a baby? Why? You say, why not? You say, because he doesn't have a womb. Can you lead people from Babylon to Jerusalem? No, because you don't have a womb.

Same reason. The womb is what Daniel had of a self-disciplined life, judging himself, studying the Word, praying, fasting. You read later on in Daniel chapter 10.

Daniel chapter 10. Now he is about ninety years old. And this time we read, in those days, he says in verse one, in the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, a message was revealed to Daniel.

Revelation. That's another great word in Daniel. Revelation.

And the message was true and one of great conflict. Have you ever had a battle in your whole life? Have you ever had a spiritual battle with Satan, even once? Have you ever had a conflict with Satan? You know where, you know how it is physically, if somebody is trying to push you down and you fight with him and finally you pin him down. Have you ever had, once in your life, a conflict like that with Satan in prayer? Where you battled and finally pinned him down and put your foot on top of him and said, you are down, Satan.

Not even once? We are all comfort loving, music loving, conference loving, happy-go-lucky Christians. We are not going to build Jerusalem, my brothers and sisters. We have come to the conference for fun and games.

And we go away from the conference and have fun and games. Like in the days of Noah, it will be said, in the days in India, in the early 2000s, people came for conferences and they ate and they drank and they considered marriage alliances and they got married and gave in marriage and then they went home and they ate and they drank and they came for their meetings and they sang wonderful songs. They played so many instruments and they did all that, they accomplished nothing.

Because the most important thing, studying the Word, fasting, praying, disciplining their life, judging only themselves and not judging others, they never did. They had knowledge. Boy, you should have seen the size of their heads.

Ooh, such big heads. They had so much knowledge. You should have read what all they could write.

Boy, what all they could preach in their churches. Their knowledge was fantastic. Their usefulness to God was pretty close to zero.

It was a conflict. And he understood the vision. Vision is another word in the book of Daniel.

Vision. The Lord said in Acts 2, I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh and your young men shall see vision. Your own men will dream dreams.

This is how it must be, that I have a vision. God's got a plan for my life and nothing is going to shake me from that. I read somewhere in some book about a young communist.

This was years ago when communism was a big thing in the West. Russia was a big communist country those days. And there was a young communist who wrote a letter to his girlfriend.

I think it was in America or England or somewhere. He is very close to his girlfriend and he was writing a letter saying, I have to break up my relationship with you, darling so-and-so. I've got to break up my relationship with you because I have become a serious-minded communist now.

I have no time for girlfriends. I have no time to waste my money on taking you for dinners and parties. All my spare money goes to the party.

We've got a purpose. We're going to change the world. We are communists.

I have no time to fool around with things that other people fool around with. I have no time for ice creams and parties and things like that. Everything must be for communism.

I have no time to date you because we have our communist cell group meetings. I have to go for that every day. And I read this in a book which says, I wonder how many Christians there are like this.

Yeah? Vision. Those people had a vision. They didn't succeed.

Communism failed. We have a vision that's going to succeed. But Christians are among the laziest people when compared with Muslims who go for hajjis and go every Friday to fast, Buddhists who fast and pray and spend time with their rituals.

And even with Hindus who go to haridwar and sanyasis and hermits. Christians are among the laziest of the lot. They eat and they drink and they have a good time.

And they believe that salvation is by grace. Everything is absolutely free. You don't do anything.

You just sit back and eat and drink and sleep and get up one day and go to heaven. You're going to get a big surprise when Jesus comes. To see how the devil fooled you that you wasted your earthly life which could have been so tremendously useful to God if you had decided to be a little more serious about your Christianity and go and study in the book of Daniel and see how these people accomplished something.

Go and study the life of Jesus and see how he fasted for 40 days. Go and study in the lives of the apostles and see in Acts chapter 13 how they fasted and they worshipped the Lord. This is New Testament, Acts 13.

They fasted and worshipped the Lord and the Holy Spirit spoke. Why doesn't the Holy Spirit speak nowadays? Where are the people who are fasting and worshipping the Lord? It's in that atmosphere that the Holy Spirit spoke. You read in Acts 13 verse 1 and 2 and 3. This is my plan for the furtherance of the ministry.

And Saul and Barnabas went out from that fasting and worshipping meeting. They were not seeking for some healing with their fasting and worshipping. They were not even praying.

They were fasting and worshipping. They had no requests. They were worshipping God and fasting when God came down and spoke and said this is the way the ministry must go on in the future.

And God guided them. And there began the great, first great missionary movement of the early church. It started in a fasting and worshipping meeting.

And those people went out from there, Saul and Barnabas and the established churches all over. It all started from this womb, remember? Without a womb there can't be a baby. There wasn't a baby in Daniel's time without a womb.

There wasn't a baby in Acts 13 without a womb. There has to be a womb. In history there has never been a baby born without a womb.

And all the great revivals in church history have always come when somebody provided a womb. A womb of fasting and prayer and study of the word and stopping judging other people and judging themselves. Only.

That's what it says in Isaiah 58. And let me come to that in a moment. But then they went out, Saul and Barnabas and established churches and came back and they wanted to appoint leaders for these churches.

And they got first class leaders. And it says in Acts 14, 22, 23, they fasted and they prayed and they appointed these elders. And they didn't go talking about it.

20, 30 years later, 20, 30 years later, Luke writes about it in Acts of the Apostles. Let it be written 20, 30 years later. Today keep quiet about it.

Isaiah 58 it says, cry loudly, God says to Isaiah, don't hold back, raise your voice like a trumpet and declare to my people their transgressions. They say, verse 3, why have we fasted and you have not seen us, O God? Why have we humbled ourselves and you have not noticed? Because on the day of your fast, you still do what you want. You advertise your fasting to other people.

You fast for contention and strife, you criticize people, you judge people. Is this the type of fast, verse 5, which I choose? Your voice will not be heard on high, verse 4, with this type of fasting. What is the type of fast I choose, verse 6? To loosen the bands of wickedness, to let the oppressed go free, to care for the poor.

And, verse 9, last part, to stop pointing your finger at other people. To stop pointing your finger at your elders and other brothers and other churches and just stop it. He says, then I'll listen to you.

Then, if you do that, the Lord will guide you, verse 11, and you will be like a water garden and you will, verse 12, rebuild Jerusalem. You will rebuild the age-old foundations and you will be called a repairer of the breach. Do you think God finds it? How many people do you think God finds in our churches who don't point their finger at others? It's very difficult, very, very difficult.

Everywhere I go, I find this, even in our churches. The devil is a master accuser and he's a master at getting fellowship with people who accuse their brethren. And I have seen, when these people get up to speak, what do they have on their mouth? Absolutely nothing.

Words, words, correct words, but no anointing, nothing that makes people's hearts burn. Young people who should be on fire for God, they are not on fire. It's pathetic.

Brothers and sisters, the fire in you must burn. Ask your wife whether there's a fire in you when you speak. Ask your wife whether that fire is growing.

My wife first heard me preach 36 years ago, when she was a medical college student. And I ask her sometimes, I say, you heard me preach 36 years ago. Do you find a fire in my heart today when I speak? Is it the same? Is it more? I check upon myself.

My wife is the only one who will tell me the truth. Your wife will tell you the truth. Tell you there's no fire in you, you're cold, you're philosophical, you just got words, knowledge, boring people.

Then humble yourself. How do we humble ourselves? Here, Psalm 35. How to humble ourselves? Many, many ways.

Here is one more way. One among the many ways to humble ourselves. Psalm 35, verse 13, David says in the middle, I humbled my soul with fasting.

Have you ever tried humbling yourself that way? I humbled my soul with fasting. Yeah. Now one more verse and then I'll close.

Psalm 109, verse 24. Again, David. Psalm 109, verse 24, David says, My knees are weak through fasting.

Are you surprised that David was called a man after God's own heart? You want to be a man after God's own heart? Your knees are not weak, your knees are strong. Brothers and sisters, we have missed something. And he who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, help us to take heed to what you have said to us in these days, in these crucial days in our country, where you need many young men and women who will stand true to you. Raise up such a generation in our midst, we pray.

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