

(Through the Bible) Daniel

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of standing for God, even in the face of opposition, and the role of prayer, humility, and faith in building a pure church.

Duration: 55:40

Scripture: Daniel 1:8, Daniel 6:10, Daniel 9:3, Daniel 10:12, Daniel 12:3

Topics: "Faith And Persecution", "Prayer And Obedience"

Description

This sermon delves into the book of Daniel, focusing on the relevance of Daniel's life in times of persecution. It highlights Daniel's unwavering faith, prayer life, and commitment to God's purposes, starting a movement from Babylon to Jerusalem. The sermon emphasizes the importance of standing firm for God in a heathen land, even if it means facing trials and persecution. It also discusses the significance of prayer, faithfulness, and not compromising in the face of challenges, drawing parallels to modern-day Christian living.

Transcript

Let's turn now to the book of Daniel. Daniel chapter 1. Daniel, I believe, is a book that has special relevance for times of persecution, how a man of God should conduct himself in times of persecution. And we see here in Daniel that the restoration and the movement from Babylon, from corrupt, compromising Christendom to Jerusalem, to God's perfect will and a new covenant church, begins with one man.

It begins with one upright man called Daniel who is uncompromising and who prays and fasts and is concerned about God's purposes. He never knew what would be the result when he started out as a young man. But because he was faithful, he was probably around 17 years old when the book begins in chapter 1. And by the time he finishes, he's about 90 years old.

He lived through the entire 70 years of captivity. And you find in chapter 9 that he's praying because the 70 years are over. And he was the man whom God used to begin the process.

And it all began through prayer. See, the building of a pure church for God in any place, in this land or anywhere, always begins with at least one man who has a burden of prayer and who carries that burden before God. Lord, I want a pure church in this town.

Maybe God's called you to work in a village or any place. And if you have a burden in your heart, Lord, I want a pure church in this village or this town for you. And I'm willing to pay any price.

And you carry that burden before God, you may have to carry for a long, long time, many years perhaps. And God will test your faithfulness. But just like a mother carries a baby in her womb, we got to carry something before God in prayer.

And that's how Daniel carried this burden in his heart, which finally resulted in other people, Haggai, Zerubbabel, Joshua, Zechariah, Ezra, Nehemiah, many of these people who finally went and built the church. Daniel was too old to go then, but he was the man who started the ball rolling. So he's a great challenge to us in our time.

And also, he's an example for us as to how to stand for God in a heathen land. Daniel was in a heathen land without compromising how to gather other people who will not compromise, not to gather everybody, for he gathered only three people, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, which was their Babylonian names. They had other Jewish names, which we are not so familiar with.

But he gathered only a few. That was a church in Babylon, a church of four people, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. But those four people influenced that country more than all the other hundreds and thousands of Jews who were there, because of one reason, all the others compromised.

And these four did not. Don't think that you can influence a village or a country by numbers. Four people who stand for God influenced a country.

So the message that comes through all these prophets, that it is not by numbers, it's not by power or by might, says the Lord, but by my spirit. God is looking for men who are upright and who will not compromise. I want to show you two verses here.

One of the key words in the book of Daniel is vision. God needs men of vision. It occurs a number of times, over 30 times in the book of Daniel.

But two phrases I want you to see, which describe certain principles in Daniel's life. First of all, the phrase, the Lord gave, in verse two, it's referring to the book of Nazareth, the Lord gave him victory. But many times it occurs, the Lord gave Daniel favor.

So the first truth we learn here is again, like in Ezekiel, of the sovereignty of God. We saw that in the first chapter of Daniel, sorry, Ezekiel. And here we see in the first chapter of Daniel, the sovereign rule of God, who determines that Nebuchadnezzar should now get power over Jerusalem and teach them a lesson.

The second verse, the second phrase is in verse eight. He made up his mind, Daniel, not to defile himself. He decided that I am not going to compromise.

Now these are two factors that we need to bear in mind in a time of persecution. One, even if a heathen king like Nebuchadnezzar, who doesn't know God, is in control of a situation, remember, it's the Lord who has allowed it. Like it says, the Lord gave him victory.

The Lord gives certain people victory in the elections or in a war. And we recognize the sovereignty of God in allowing certain people to rule. Okay, Nebuchadnezzar knew nothing about God.

And the rulers of our country may know nothing about God also. But in that country, God has people like Daniel, like you and me. And what is our calling? To believe in the sovereignty of God that has established this rule and to determine that we will not defile ourselves.

We will not allow our conscience to be defiled by any sin. As soon as we are aware of sin, we confess it, cleanse it away, apologize, set things right. We will not compromise at any cost.

We will not seek to please any man. We will not seek to please Nebuchadnezzar. We will not seek to please his authorities.

We will submit to them, but we will not compromise our convictions, even if we have to lose our head. That is what we learned from Daniel. And we know the story, so I don't need to go into it in detail.

Daniel made up his mind and his first test was in relation to food. The first test that came to Adam and Eve was in relation to food. The first test that came to Jesus in the wilderness was in relation to food.

First temptation mentioned there. That's very interesting. What is it going to be your attitude to tasty food if it means compromise of God's principles? Esau lost the birthright because of food.

Isaac lost his spiritual vision because he loved the tasty food that Esau brought. There are many, many, many warnings in scripture about people who are lovers of food missing out on God's will. Daniel determined.

God has said this type of meat is not to be eaten. There are certain laws. We study that in Leviticus 11.

And he said, I'm not going to eat it. I'm not going to drink this wine. And in the beginning, he stood alone.

There were many other Jews who were there and Daniel stood alone. And when verse 11, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, that was the old names of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, when they saw one man taking a stand for God, they got courage to join him. Now, if Daniel had not taken a stand, we would never have heard about Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah because, you know, among Christians, I find there are three types of people.

One is the out and out compromisers. That is in thousands and millions today. And then a second group is those like Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, who don't have the courage to stand on their own, but who are willing to take a stand if somebody else takes a stand on his own.

That's the second group. There's a much smaller, very, very few. And then you have the third group, which is still smaller.

It's like the outer court and the holy place and the most holy place in the tabernacle. And this you may find one person here and one person there like Daniel, who will take a stand even if nobody takes a stand. I believe in India, in many, many places, there are a number of people like Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, who want to take a stand for God, for a pure testimony for the Lord in their locality, but who don't have the courage to stand on their own.

They are waiting for a Daniel. And when a Daniel comes to that village or that town, then these people will come together and gather around him. And if a Daniel never comes to that place, these people will live and die without being in pure testimony for the Lord.

So what is the challenge in our country? God is looking for Daniels who determine in their heart, I will not defile myself. And when they take a stand, they will draw automatically the Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. If you don't believe me, try it out.

We've seen it happen in many, many places in this land. God looks for a man first. And if he cannot find a man, it'll always be confusion.

And also we have seen in different places in our land. God looks for a man who does not seek his own, who's not interested in anything for himself, who's willing to lose his life. Maybe a young man.

He was only 17 years old. Think that God could choose a man who's 17 years old and make him a prophet, make him take a stand. And these other people may have been older than Daniel, but they joined him.

They recognized him as their leader. And Daniel had that faith. We read in verse 12, he says to the king's authority there, you can test us for 10 days.

I have faith. If I eat vegetables and water, I'll be better off than all these other people who are eating the rich food. He had that faith.

And it's important that God finds people who have, who can make this confession of faith. And at the end of 10 days, exactly like he said, they looked, verse 15, healthier and better than everybody else. Now, verse 15, we see God supernaturally giving them power for health in their body.

In verse 17, we read God blessing them in with intelligence for their mind. And these four men had an unusual aptitude for learning literature and science. And God gave them special ability, gave Daniel special ability in understanding the meaning of visions and dreams that is spirit.

So in those verses, we see God supernaturally enabling them for body, soul, and spirit. And I believe we need to trust God to give us health in our body, intelligence in our mind to understand his ways, and spiritual vision, supernaturally by the Holy Spirit. Now we go to chapter two.

I'm not going to go into all the details, just point out a few verses here and there. Here we read about these dream that Nebuchadnezzar had. And Nebuchadnezzar calls the astrologers and tells them, tell me what is the meaning of this dream.

And those astrologers are a picture of creatures who have no touch with God. They are deceivers. They cannot interpret God's word correctly.

They cannot interpret the times correctly. Oh, they say, well, only the gods can explain all this. Verse 11, nobody living among men can do all this is an impossible thing.

How in the world can we know what you dreamt? But you tell us the dream, and then we will explain it to you. You tell us the dream. Now, you know that when somebody does your dream, you can cook up any interpretation you like, and give them, pretend that you are in touch with God.

But like a lot of creatures today, pretend to be in touch with God, just take a verse and give whatever interpretation they like to it, and say, this is what God says. But Nebuchadnezzar was a shrewd fellow. He says, if you fellows are really in touch with God, you should be able to tell the dream also.

Absolutely right. And in a true servant of God, there's a certain element of the supernatural. If you are truly anointed by God, you will have experiences in your ministry, where you go to a place where you don't know anybody, and you preach God's word, and it will be exactly according to the need of some people sitting there, that they will almost think that somebody came and told you about their problems.

See, this is the element of prophecy that we need to have in our ministry. We got to seek for it, earnestly desire prophecy. And Daniel, when he heard about this, we find that he was calm.

He handled the situation, verse 14, with great wisdom. Young man, 17, 20 years old perhaps, with great wisdom. Do you have to make mistakes when you're young? Some people say, well, young people always make mistakes.

Well, Daniel didn't. We don't read of a single wrong thing that Daniel did in his entire life. He was a unique man, somewhat like Joseph, another young man, about whom almost nothing wrong is recorded.

Daniel was another young man. Why don't you make these young people your examples, and say, Lord, I don't have to do the foolish things other young people do. I want to be, I want to follow the examples of these men who lived in humility and the fear of God, and right from youth, they lived in uprightness.

I must say that it's very rare to find such young people. Most young people that I have found, even in our own churches, do a lot of stupid foolish things, mainly because they don't submit to their elders. They think they're very clever, and they do 101 foolish things, 1001 foolish things, and that way learn.

But I want to say that is a better way. If you learn to humble yourself, and live in the fear of God, and submit to authorities, you can learn from your youth without doing stupid foolish things, without saying stupid foolish things. Daniel is a wonderful example of that.

And here is the dream of Daniel, the dream that Nebuchadnezzar had. Daniel explains it to him, but how did he get the answer? First of all, he had faith that God will reveal this. He went to God, he urged them, he, first of all, he called his friends, verse 17.

I believe there's a tremendous value in fellowship in prayer. When you face a problem which is too difficult for you, Daniel understood the principle of the body. He was a new covenant man living in old covenant times, and he said, let's, let me not pray about this alone, let me get these three brothers, and let's pray together.

And they prayed together, and he said, let's pray to God, verse 18, and ask him to show us mercy, and reveal this to us. And they, first of all, began their prayer with praise. It's a very good habit to practice, verse 20.

First of all, they said, praise the Lord for his sovereignty, verse 21. He is the one who determines the course of all events in the world. He's the one who removes kings, and he's the one who sets others on the throne.

He's the one who gives wisdom to the wise, knowledge to the scholars. He's the one who reveals deep and mysterious things. I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors, because you've done, you've given us wisdom and strength.

I've often told people, when you find your, you pray, and you can't get through, start praising the Lord. Think of how great God is, and you'll find the atmosphere clears up immediately. Learn to praise God.

Learn to fellowship with other people. And then, God revealed it to him, and he went and told the king, okay, here is the answer. And he acknowledges, in verse 30, this is not due to my cleverness.

It's because God revealed it to me. A humble man is the one to whom God reveals, one who is willing to give God the glory for it. And then, in verse 31 onwards, he describes this statue that Nebuchadnezzar saw, a statue with a head of gold, and the body of silver, and the chest and arms were silver, and the stomach and thighs were bronze, and the legs were iron, and the feet were a combination of iron and clay.

Now, this symbolized, the head of gold symbolized Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian empire, which would last for about 70 years. And then, next would come the Medo-Persian empire, this chest and arms of silver, which would last for a little less than 200 years. And then, below that were the belly and thighs of bronze, which symbolized the Grecian empire, which would last for, with Alexander the Great, which would last for, and his father, which would last for another little less than 200 years.

And then, the legs of iron, which spoke of the Roman empire, which was in the time of Christ, which would last for about 600 years. And then, finally, the feet of iron and clay, which iron speaks of dictatorship, clay speaks of democracy, and that is speaking about the last days. We have dictatorships in the world today, democracies in the world today, iron and clay, and like the feet have 10 toes, it speaks also about 10 kingdoms that are going to come together, possibly in Europe, headed up by the Antichrist, which would finally precede the coming of Jesus to the earth.

So, here was a vision that God gave to Nebuchadnezzar, a heathen king, about what's going to happen right on till the end of time. And then, we read in verse, another stone would come, it says, that will shatter these kingdoms to nothing. Verse 30, it says, a rock cut from the mountain.

Verse 34, struck the feet and smashed the whole statute of bits, which is a picture of the reign of Christ. Verse 24, the God of heaven will set a kingdom which will never be destroyed. So, God gave Nebuchadnezzar a vision of right up to the millennium, to the coming of Christ and setting up his kingdom.

Now, you need to understand this statue, gold, silver, bronze, and iron, to understand the next chapter, why Nebuchadnezzar, where chapter 3, verse 1, made a statue entirely of gold. You understand the message? The message is, I'm going to be there till the end. There's not going to be any silver, there's not going to be any bronze, there's not going to be any iron, it's going to be gold all the way through.

Like they used to say in those days to the king, O king, live forever. That was the way they used to greet the people. And this chap was so stupid, he thought he's going to live forever till Jesus comes again.

But this is a haughtiness. And chapter 3, verse 1, you read about this statue that Nebuchadnezzar made, not of gold, silver, and bronze, but totally of gold. And he got everybody to worship it.

Now, it's obvious that Daniel was not in town in those days. At that particular time, when this happened, he was away somewhere. And these three people, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were alone there.

All the other Jews compromised. And I believe God left Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego alone at that time, in order to test them, and in order to strengthen them. You know, it's not good for us when we always have a man of God like Daniel there.

Sometimes it's good if he's not there, so that we can learn to lean upon God ourselves. You know, we find comfort when a godly man is always there. But the danger of having that godly man always there is that you tend to lean upon him, and you don't lean upon the Lord.

The danger of having a fantastic Bible teacher always with you is that you'll never study the Bible yourself. So, it's good that you don't have a fantastic Bible teacher with you all the time. It's good that you don't have a godly man with you all the time, because that will drive you to God.

That will drive you to dependence on the Holy Spirit to teach you His Word. That will drive you to dependence on the Holy Spirit to strengthen you to face this trial. So, God, in His sovereignty, permitted Daniel not to be there at this time.

And then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego passed the test. Nebuchadnezzar was furious and said, if you don't, verse 19, if you don't bow down, I'm going to heat the furnace seven times. And they still didn't bow down.

I can imagine that the other Jews would have come to them and said, listen, just compromise a little bit. We got to adjust. We got to learn to live in these difficult times.

Just nod your head a little bit. Even that will do. And they said, no.

Maybe they even suggested, why don't you bow down? Then you can always go to God afterwards and say, Lord, please forgive me for that sin. You know, the clever way which people think of, we can sin and then afterwards go and ask God to forgive us. We can sign a false certificate and gain something and then ask God to forgive us.

There are people I know who've done that. You know, they were converted from Schedule Caste to Christians and now they know that they can't get that vacancy as a Schedule Caste, but they will still write on Schedule Caste to get that job. And after they get the job, they say, well, Lord, I'm really sorry for doing that.

Please forgive me. And they think they're very clever because they got the job and they also pleased God. But if you got a job by telling a lie, are you in the place where God wants you to be? You're going to have problems.

And I know people like that who had problems. You can never get into the place God has allotted for you by telling a lie. No.

You have to say, listen, I'm not going to bow down to your idols. I'm not going to compromise. I'm not going to tell a lie.

Maybe a very small thing, but I'm not going to tell a lie. And if I'm going to lose something because of that, fine, I'm willing to lose it. That's the quality of disciples we should produce.

Not only we should be ourselves. That's the quality of disciples we should produce. Daniel was like that himself.

And he taught Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to be like that. Don't you see that in Babylon, it was better to have four people like that than 400 compromisers who just bowed down to idols and ate whatever the king gave and also said that they believed in God. This is a tragedy in India today.

We have a pathetic testimony among Christians who fight with each other, who tell lies and who are not upright and many things like that. And God longs for Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Ananias, Meshach and Azariah who will stand for him without compromise in a day of compromise. And we see their total content of death.

They're not afraid of dying. They say, God, we don't know whether God will deliver us, they say. But if God delivers us well and good, if he doesn't, we're still not going to bow down to your idol.

And what was the result? When they're thrown into the furnace, only the ropes got burned. That's a wonderful picture that when Satan harasses us, what does he burn out from us? He burns the things that bind us. He cannot burn anything valuable.

When we are put in the fire, what are the things that get burnt? The things that bind us get burnt and we come out free. So was the fire good or bad? It was good. If a fire has succeeded in freeing you from attachment to earthly things, most of us are like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, tied with ropes to earthly things.

And then God puts us into a fire, some difficult trial and the attachment to earthly things goes. The ropes are burnt and we come out free. Thank God for the fires.

Thank God for the trials. That's what we learned from their passage. And I believe the greatest miracle here in this chapter three, if I were to ask you, what is the greatest miracle here in chapter three? You'd say, well, they went into the fire and came out.

To me, the greatest miracle is when everybody bowed down, three people did not bow down. That's the miracle. I saw a picture once of this big statue 90 feet high and all these people, whole thousands of them with their face to the ground and three people standing up.

Years ago, I saw it and I said, Lord, make me like that. When everybody is compromising, but I stand out as different, even if they shoot me first. Pray that prayer and God will make you like that.

Keep that picture in your mind always. In chapter four, we read verse six and seven. Again, he had a dream that frightened him and he called again, the wise man.

About 32 years earlier, he had that other dream and he knew the wise man couldn't help him. Only Daniel could help him, but he still goes back to the wise man. And of course they couldn't help him.

And Daniel explains the dream, how God is going to judge him. This tree is also a picture of you, but because of your pride, God is going to cut you down. But the interesting thing is that he did not listen.

Daniel told him, verse 27, King Nebuchadnezzar, please listen to me. This dream is a warning to you that you should stop sinning and do what is right. Break from your wicked past, be merciful to poor people.

And perhaps this dream may not be fulfilled. Judgment will not come. But Nebuchadnezzar didn't listen.

One year later, verse 29, he was walking on the roof of his palace, Babylon. You see this stream of Babylon in Jerusalem, right from the time of Cain. You see it here.

What is the essential force with which Babylon is built? You see that in verse 30, by man, through man, to man. I have built this with my wisdom, by my power and for my glory. When a church is built with human

wisdom, by human power, and for a man's glory, that is Babylon, even if its doctrines are all evangelical.

When a work, a Christian work, is done by human cleverness, and by human power and ability, and by the power of money, and for man's glory, whatever the doctrine, it is Babylon. The true work of God is done according to God's plans, which comes as a result of waiting on God in prayer. And it is done in the power of the Holy Spirit, with supernatural help from above.

Whether there's money or no money doesn't matter. It's a part of the Holy Spirit, and it is done 100% for the glory of God. Please remember this all your life, and it will save you from wasting your time building with wood, hay, and straw.

God warned him three times. We read in verse 31, and he did not listen, and so he was punished, and he became like a madman eating grass like a cow, verse 32. And finally, when he repented, he was changed again.

And when he repented, see here's a man in Daniel chapter 2, we read God had warned him, Daniel chapter 3, Daniel chapter 4, three times God had warned him, and he didn't listen. And finally God punished him, and he spent seven periods of time, we read in verse 32. And then he repented, and when he repented, he made one of the most fantastic statements about the sovereignty of God found anywhere in the Bible, in verse 34 and 35.

And this is what makes me believe that Nebuchadnezzar is probably in heaven today. Isn't that interesting? Solomon is in hell, and Nebuchadnezzar is in heaven. Because he says, Lord, I acknowledge now that your rule is everlasting.

Your kingdom is eternal. All the people of the earth are nothing compared to God. He has the power to do exactly as he pleases, not only among the angels of heaven, but among all those who live on the earth.

No one can stop him. No one can challenge him. No one can say to him, what are you doing? Now if he lived according to that faith till the end of his life, I believe he'd have entered God's kingdom.

When his sanity returned to him, so did his honor and glory and kingdom. Now verse 37, I praise and glorify and honor the king of heaven. And I acknowledge that all those who are proud, God is able to humble.

And then we read of Nebuchadnezzar is dead, and Belshazzar is another king who rules in chapter 5. And there we read about this feast at which they found these letters coming on the wall. It was the end of the Babylonian empire. Just by way of in passing, let me mention there are only two places in the Bible where it says God actually wrote something.

One is the 10 commandments and the other is these words here. It's very significant. And nobody could interpret this.

And then they said, well, again the king's wise men, they said, there is a man here who can, the queen mother heard it, verse 10, and said, there is a man in your kingdom who could explain these things in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, call him. And Daniel came and Daniel was brought there. And he said, I don't want your gifts.

When Daniel, this man said, I'll give you purple robes of honor and I'll, verse 16, I'll wear you, give you a gold chain and I'll make you the third highest ruler in the kingdom. Daniel answered the king, listen to these words in verse 17, keep your gifts to yourself or give them to someone else. Like Elisha told Naaman, you know, a true man of God is revealed by his attitude to gifts.

What is your attitude to gifts? Particularly when ungodly people like Belshazzar want to give you large gifts because you did something for them in the name of Jesus. That's where you test a true man of God. That's where you find an Elisha and a Daniel stand out as different from all other people and say, no, thank you.

Keep your gifts to yourself. I don't want them. I'll still bless you.

I'll still give you the word, but I don't want your gifts. Please keep that in mind. Many, many people have destroyed themselves by receiving gifts from people whom they should not have received it from.

It's right to receive it from God's people if they give it to you voluntarily, if they are better off financially than you are, but it's not right to receive money from people who are worse off financially than you are, even if they are believers or if they are unbelievers. And then Daniel explains the dream to him. He reads the writing.

First of all, he gives a message to Belshazzar. He said, you know all that happened, verse 22, but you're not humble yourself. You've defied God by taking the cups from the temple to drink.

See, Daniel was a fearless prophet and he warned the king of this danger. And then he reads these words in verse 25, mini, mini, tickle, parson, and interprets it. We saw that the first instance of speaking in tongues is in Balaam's donkey.

And here is the first instance of interpretation of tongues, also in the Old Testament, where this unknown language was interpreted by Daniel. Mini means numbered. God has numbered the days of your reign.

Tickle means you're weighed. Parson means divided. And I believe that is God's word to Babylonian religious systems today.

What is that? God has numbered your days. It's going to come to an end. You have been weighed by God and there's nothing heavy in you.

Everything is so light, nothing of eternal weight in you. It's all worldliness and therefore your kingdom is divided. In chapter 6, we come to the time of Darius.

In that very night, we read in verse 30 of chapter 5, Babylon was destroyed and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom at the age of 62. Now Darius the Mede also appointed Daniel, we read in verse 2, to be administrators. Even though Daniel was a prime minister in the previous kingdom, he made him prime minister of his kingdom too.

It's amazing testimony Daniel had. Now Daniel was over 80 years old and he was still the same uncompromising man that he always was. And you know the story here how there were evil people who were trying to destroy Daniel.

It's very relevant for the time in which we live today. Evil people try to destroy God's servants, the church. And so these administrators and princes, it's so similar to what's happening in government situations

today.

They go to the king or today to the government and try to pass a law. A law that is primarily directed against God's people. And the king and the government passes the law that you should not convert people to Christ or whatever it is.

You should not pray to any other God and if you do, you'll be thrown into jail or whatever it is. Here it was being thrown to the lions. It's a very similar situation to what's happening today.

And Daniel learned, verse 10, just like we learned from the newspapers, that the law has been signed. The government has passed this law. What do you do then? The law is you must not pray to anybody else.

That was the law here. In our time it may be something else. The principle is the same.

As soon as Daniel learned this law, he went home and knelt down and prayed. He fears God more than any earthly king. His principle is the same as the apostles.

We ought to obey God, Acts 5:29, rather than men. We ought to obey God rather than men. So the very thing which the law says you should not do, he goes and does.

He said, this law is not going to stop me from praying to God. I'm going to do it. And the interesting thing is, he always used to pray with his windows open towards Jerusalem.

This day he could have thought, well, let me close it today. But he doesn't. He keeps it open and prays.

He says, let everybody see that I'm praying. Let everybody know I'm a Christian. I'm a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Whatever laws you may pass, it doesn't make a difference to me. What an example for us in our time. And he prayed not just once a day, three times a day, just as he had always done.

And these officials were just waiting. They're looking, they knew this fellow always prays near the window. They caught him and they reported it to the government.

And the king said, yeah, that's the law of the Medes and the Persians. It cannot be revoked. And when the king heard it was Daniel, he liked Daniel and he tried to save him.

And he spent the rest of the day, verse 14, trying to save Daniel, but he couldn't do it. In the evening, those evil people said, well, the king is the law of the Medes and the Persians. You can't do anything about it.

Throw Daniel into the den of lions. And when he was thrown in there, he came out untouched. There are people around waiting to harm us.

To me today, God may allow physical lions to eat us up. God may allow physical fire to burn us. Unlike in the book of Daniel, where the fire and the lions could not touch God's servants.

The history of the church reveals that thousands of Christians and millions of Christians have been killed. In the early days, they were actually thrown to the lions and the lions ate them up. And they were burnt at the stake and the fire burnt them up.

But there was one line that could not touch them. And that was Satan. So to me, these lines are a picture of Satan.

That Satan cannot touch me. Even if these physical lions eat me up. The fire of hell cannot touch me.

Even if these physical fires on earth burn up my body. So that is our position today as Christians. We do not allow anything of hell, anything of hatred, anything of bitterness to ever come into our heart.

We stand for God, uncompromising. In all the sufferings we go through, we do not allow any of the spirit of hell to touch us. We'll be able to say this prince of the world comes and he's got nothing in me.

He cannot touch me at all. And then he came out and he was a testimony to that new generation. So God allows certain trials to come into our life in order to make us a testimony to this land.

You know that in our country recently, this brother Graham Staines was burnt. And I believe that the testimony of his widow was such a unique testimony to the spirit of Christ, to this whole country. Such as this country has probably not seen in another person in such a wonderful way.

There God allows certain things to happen to show forth what Christianity is really like. And God allowed this trial in Daniel's time, in Shadrach's time. And God may allow a trial in your life.

The purpose is that you will manifest the spirit of Christ in that trial. If you are taken to court, determined to speak the truth. Determined not to hate anyone.

Never to hate anyone. And if we one day we have to lay down our lives for the gospel, let's lay it down with our heads lifted up and praising the Lord. Because we confess that God is on the throne.

The first six chapters are historical in Daniel. The remaining six chapters are more prophecies about the future. In chapter 7 and 8 we have Daniel being given a vision of future world kingdoms.

Just like Nebuchadnezzar. And the interesting thing you see in chapter 7 also is the same four kingdoms. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome.

And the final world empire. But one big difference. Nebuchadnezzar saw them as precious metals.

Gold, silver, bronze and iron. Daniel sees them as God sees them as wild beasts. A lot of earthly kingdoms, people on earth look at them as precious metals.

Place of honor to be a president, prime minister, ruler of a kingdom. But God sees these same kingdoms in an entirely different light. And when Daniel is given a vision, he doesn't see them as gold, silver and bronze.

He sees them as wild beasts. And they're all wild beasts. All the kingdoms of the earth.

Because the world is under the control of the devil. And the interesting thing I want you to see here is that so much of detail in these prophecies in chapter 7, chapter 11 were exactly fulfilled in the coming years. If you read secular history, you find this is exactly like that.

In chapter 7 verse 4 you find that Nebuchadnezzar's wings were pulled off. Chapter 7 verse 5 you read about Medo-Persia, the second beast, looked like a bear. And then chapter 7 verse 6, the one looked like a leopard.

It had four wings and four heads. That's when Alexander the Great died, his kingdom was divided into four. History tells us that.

And chapter 7 verse 7 we read about that final kingdom with 10 horns coming up and towards the end of time. Towards the end of this chapter, we read about God sitting on his throne in verse 13 onwards with millions and millions of angels worshipping him. And he asks the angels about this fourth beast and he's told that this is going to be towards the end of time.

The Roman Empire that's finally going to end up with the 10 kingdom empire at the end of time. In chapter 8, there's a little more detail again about these kingdoms and what we read. Remember Daniel is an old man now.

He's about 87 years old and he's still having visions and dreams just like he had when he was a young man. He's walking faithfully with God and here he has a vision of the Grecian Empire in verses 5 to 8. And it says in verse 8, the goat became very powerful. This is exactly what happened to the empire of Greece.

Became very powerful, became a world ruler unlike Babylon and Medo-Persia. But at the height of its power, when Alexander the Great thought he had conquered everything when he was around 33 years old, the horn was suddenly broken off. Alexander's death.

And when he died, four prominent horns came up. And those are Alexander's four generals who divided the kingdom among themselves. And it goes on to describe them and the one referred to in verse 23, at the end of their rule when their sin is in sight, a fierce king, a master of intrigue, will rise to power.

This was a king who ruled Syria, one of Alexander's generals descendants called Antiochus Epiphanes. And he's a picture of the Antichrist. Now chapter 9, we read of Daniel praying for his people.

This is the movement that started in Babylon. Daniel's prayer started the ball rolling, the movement from Babylon to Jerusalem. It's a wonderful prayer.

He's 87 years old at least, and he's still studying God's word. He's still fasting and praying in verse 3, just like he did in his younger days. It's wonderful to see a man of God year after year after year after year after year, 70 years and still just as much on fire as he was in his teenage years, studying the word just as much as in his younger days, fasting and praying just as much as in his younger days, and still a servant of the people like he was in his younger days.

Wonderful example in Daniel, a unique servant of God in the scriptures. If you keep examples like this before your eyes, you can be one like that yourself. And he prayed, and he doesn't criticize other people.

He doesn't say, Lord, these fellows are all terrible backsliders. He says, Lord, you're a great and awesome God, but verse 5, we have sinned. We have rebelled.

We have refused to listen to your messages. Lord, you are right, but our faces, verse 7, is covered with shame. This is true of all of us.

Oh, Lord, we have sinned. See, he identifies himself. Lord, it is we, not they, we.

That's the type of prayer God answers. Lord, we Christians have dishonored your name in this land. We have let you down.

We have not been the testimony for Christ that India has needed to see. We have failed. Lord, send us a revival.

Lord, you're right, but our faces are covered with shame. Be merciful and forgive us. We have sinned against you.

See, a godly man prays like that, and then God gives him a vision and tells him that, verse 24, 490 years are set apart for my purposes, and out of that, 483 years were going to be completed from the time that Jerusalem begins to be rebuilt. That is, in verse 25, we read 7 sets of 7 plus 62 sets of 7. That means 483 years will pass from the time the command is given to rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One comes. And that's exactly what happened.

In 445 BC, the command went forth to rebuild Jerusalem, and 483 years later, in 29 AD, Jesus came to Jerusalem and was crucified. So, if you understood prophecy, in the time of Daniel, you could know exactly when Christ was going to come. Quite amazing.

Now, there's a period of 47 years left out, and that seven-year period is going to be at the end of time. It's still to come when the Antichrist will rule this earth, when Christians will face tremendous persecution and tribulation all over the world, will be hated by all people all over the world, and then, at the end of it, Christ will come. Chapter 10 speaks about a struggle in the heavenlies.

Daniel is praying, and there's a great struggle going on there. He prays. It was another type of fast that he had this time.

He didn't completely abstain from food. He did not eat rich food, simple food. And he says, then this angel came to meet Daniel and said, I was trying to come, but for 21 days, verse 13, the spirit of the prince of Persia stopped me.

Some evil spirit in the heavenlies was restraining me. But from the time that Daniel began to pray, verse 12, from the very first day you began to pray, your request was heard. It took 21 days for the answer to come.

God doesn't answer our prayers immediately, but I want to say one thing about this chapter. Please remember that this happened before Calvary's cross, before the demons and Satan were defeated on Calvary. So I don't believe that I need 21 days today to cast out a demon.

Jesus never took 21 days to cast out any demon. The demons were all defeated on Calvary's cross. We today operate from a completely different position than Daniel did.

Daniel was pre-Calvary. We are post-Calvary, and the devil has been defeated today. He was defeated on Calvary's cross, so we have the right to put him under our feet now, to resist him, the effects of his work.

We may take time to see it being rectified, but we can put the devil under our feet right from day one, in Jesus name. And then in chapter 11, we read of the history of the rest of the empire there, the time of Alexander. Again, Alexander the Great is mentioned in verse 3 about a mighty king who will rise, about Antiochus Epiphanes in verse 21, who's a type of the Antichrist, a despicable man.

And a lot of things in that last section are applicable to the last days as well. And so if you read it in relation to the last days, here's a wonderful verse. Verse 32, the last part, the people who know God in the last

days will be strong.

And in the last days, verse 33, those who are wise will give instruction to many people, but many of these teachers will die by the fire and sword. They'll be jailed and robbed. There'll be a lot of persecutions, and some who are wise will fall victim to persecution 45, and they will be refined and cleansed and made pure through the persecution.

And then it goes on to describe the king. And then in chapter 12, that's the Antichrist, it's referring to the reign of the Antichrist. In chapter 12, it says there are going to be two resurrections in verse 2, finally, some to everlasting life, some to shame.

And it says, Daniel, verse 9, go your way. In the end, you will stand in the place that's appointed for you. But meanwhile, remember this, verse 3, those who are wise will finally shine as bright as the sky.

And those who turn many people to righteousness will shine like the stars forever. Do you want to shine like a star forever and ever and ever and ever in eternity? Turn people to righteousness today. Turn people to a godly life.

Spend your life turning others to godliness. Go your way, verse 13, you will rest. And at the end of the days, you will rise again to receive the reward the Lord has set aside for you.

Let's pray.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/hlYuN87Atyl.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/through-the-bible-daniel-2/>

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