Daniel - Commentaries by Paul Wilson

Prayer and the Unseen World, Prayer and the Unseen World

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Please turn to the 9th chapter of the prophet Daniel, verses 1-11 and 20-23. Read also chapter 10, including verse 1 of chapter 11.

It was my thought to review somewhat these two prayers of the prophet Daniel. It is certainly no unusual thing to find Daniel praying, for it was characteristic of that man of God that he was found in prayer often.

In the 2nd chapter, when the king had dreamed a dream and none could unfold it to him, Daniel prayed and asked his friends to pray with him for the same purpose-that the God of heaven would grant them mercies concerning this secret. When the answer came, he did not rush in to tell the king, but he stopped and thanked the Lord first.

In the 6th chapter, when the king was persuaded to sign a decree (fostered and promoted by the enemies of Daniel) that whosoever should ask a petition of any god or man save the king for thirty days should be cast into the den of lions, Daniel went into his house, kneeled upon his knees and prayed three times a day. But notice something else in that chapter. It says, "as he did aforetime." He wasn't moved by that decree; he did not alter his ordinary course of living; "He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed.. as he did aforetime." He was a man of prayer, and where you find a man of God, you will find a man of prayer.

So Daniel, in this 9th chapter, began to pray. It was "in the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus." What set him praying at this time was the fact that he found out that the children of Israel were to be in captivity in Babylon for seventy years. He knew the seventy years were about up. He believed what God said by His prophet Jeremiah, and he expected the people to return to the land when the years were fulfilled. Being a man of faith, a man of prayer and a man of the Book (I like to think of him, not as a prophet, but as the student of prophecy), he set himself to pray.

When the appointed years had run their course, God raised up Cyrus, a righteous man of the East, named one hundred and seventy-five years before his birth, for the purpose of sending them back. He not only raised up this man Cyrus, but He raised up a Daniel at the right time to confess the sins of the people as his own. In Isa. 59:16 we read, "And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor." I think the only failure of an Old Testament saint recorded in the New Testament is in Rom. 11:2: "He maketh intercession to God against Israel." It was certainly contrary to the mind of God to make intercession against the people of God. After Elijah prayed thus, he was told to go and anoint Elisha to be his successor.

This man Daniel was raised up to pray for the people of God. You will see it in like manner in men like Samuel, David, and many others who pleaded with God for His people. What was the condition of that people? Did Daniel overlook their failure which brought God's governmental dealings upon them? Not in the least. He sought, "by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes." It was no superficial work with Daniel, no feigned identification with His people. He felt their failure as his own, and it brought him low in sackcloth and ashes, in prayer and supplication (continuing in prayer). He said, "O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments." Notice the next word (verse 5): "We (not, They) have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments." He fully identifies himself with all the people. If there was one man among the captives in Babylon free from blame, it was Daniel, a man that went there through no fault of his own; he was taken captive and he lived for God there. I like to think of him leading a life of devotedness from a young man to a very old man; he was a faithful man. He purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself. It wasn't an outward thing—it was purpose of heart. He wanted to please God. He saw there in Babylon things that would defile him as a godly Jew, and he held aloof from them for God's glory. He had Scripture for what he did. May we, dear young people, have purpose of heart to seek grace from God to put far from us that which would defile us.

Daniel is now an old man; he has gone on faithfully, and now he identifies himself with the sins of the people, and he prays. There is another thing about his prayer, in verse 7: "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces." We must always bear in mind that God is righteous; He never makes any mistakes. Daniel takes all the blame for himself and his people. Notice again, in the 8th verse: "O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee."

Let us remember, dear fellow Christian, we are living in a day of ruin—in the last days of the history of the church of God on earth. Not in the days that began so brightly on the day of Pentecost, but we are in the days of 2 Timothy, when the house of God is spoken of as a "great house," in which are not only vessels to honor, but also vessels to dishonor. What are we to do? We cannot walk out of the "great house;" the "great house" is the profession of Christianity on earth. You cannot get out of it unless you give up Christianity. There is ruin and failure on every hand.

May I speak a few words to those here who are gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ? Let us beware of not, as it were, eating the sin offering. Let us beware of setting ourselves up as those who have not failed. I tremble when I see any tendency to exalt ourselves and say that we have kept the truth, or that the truth is kept by us. Brethren, this is to not have learned our lesson well. We are a part of the ruin, and we need to be in the spirit of Daniel as found in this Scripture. I am persuaded that if we set ourselves up to be something, God will show us that we are nothing. He will definitely blow upon pride. "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him." The first thing mentioned is, "a proud look." (Prov. 6:16-17.) Let us beware of setting ourselves up to be something, or of claiming to be superior to someone else. Let us give a word of caution: There is a path for faith, a path of obedience; and if we walk in that path, may we do it conscious of the fact that we are part of the failure that has come in. There is a way of maintaining the truth of remnant testimony in these last days, but we need bowed heads in the sense that we are a part of the failure of Christendom.

Daniel prayed, and when we come to verse 20 we get the answer. How promptly the answer came! "And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation." He was in a suited state of soul, and the answer came quickly. The prophecy of the seventy weeks of Daniel was given him as an answer to the state of his soul.

Notice too, he was touched, "about the time of the evening oblation." It was at the time of the offering of the evening lamb. (They were to offer a lamb in the evening and another in the morning; the fire on the altar was never to go out—all night unto the morning.) There was no evening sacrifice at that time; all that had ceased because of their sins. Daniel was out there in Babylon, but he was in the good of these things, and he was conscious that it was the time of the evening sacrifice. So, in the good of that, he gets the answer.

Let us pass on to chapter 10. Another king has come to the throne—Cyrus, who was raised up of God. Daniel had learned that his people were to go back to Jerusalem according to the prophecy of Jeremiah. The prophecy given to Daniel was postponed for a long time. We do not find Daniel going back to Jerusalem with those who went back in the first chapter of Ezra. And his state of soul had not changed; he has had a revelation of the future for a long time to come, and God has revealed to him the glory of Israel as it related to the Messiah-the glorious time when the Messiah would come. "In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled." Verses 2, 3.

Fellow Christian, what do we know about real prayer and intercession before God? Sometimes the question is asked about "fasting." In the previous chapter fasting is mentioned. And here in verse 3, he was in the spirit of fasting and mourning. The question is often asked, "Is there such a thing as fasting today?" May we not say that if we were in earnest before God, we might know more of self-denial? In this day of prosperity, luxury, etc., how much do we know of self-denial? That is the reason we so seldom hear of answered prayer. James tells us, "Ye have not, because ye ask not;" and, again, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." But there is such a thing as being in the state of fasting before God—walking in humiliation and self-judgment, owning the failure in particular, with self-denial.

Daniel waited three full weeks. Many a dear saint of God has asked for a thing he has not seen in this life. God has not promised to answer our prayers in our lifetime. The answer here came in God's own due time. We cannot hurry God.

In this 10th chapter, Daniel was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel (Tigris). It reminds one very much of the time when Saul of Tarsus was journeying to Damascus; the men journeying with him heard a voice, but Saul understood it. Here in Daniel, a great trembling came upon the men that were with him, and they fled to hide themselves; but Daniel saw this great vision. It takes state of soul and communion with the mind of God. There is such a thing as being in communion with the mind of God; if we walk with Him, we will know more about it. But I am not saying we are going to get special revelations today as Daniel did.

What Daniel saw in the vision would remind us of what John saw in the first chapter of Revelation. He saw the Lord Jesus as the Son of Man in judicial robes, and he fell at His feet as dead. A similar thing happened to Daniel here (verse 8): "Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength." The glory of the Person speaking to him brought him low. The way to get right thoughts of ourselves is to get into the presence of God.

Verse 10: "And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved." Daniel, an old man now, is addressed as, "greatly beloved." Dear young Christian, read the book of Daniel; read how he began with purpose of heart to please the Lord, and how he went on in that pathway; then, how at the end of the journey he gets this beautiful testimony-he is addressed as a man, "greatly beloved." He didn't get that by living a careless life, doing as the Babylonians did; he got it as a result of a walk of faith-living in separation to God.

I remember speaking one time with a group of young men who were Christians, all working for degrees in colleges and universities. I remember hearing of the degrees for which they were working. You know, Daniel got a good degree. God loves all of His children. There is a way in which He loves each one equally; but there is also a love of complacency—a love of delight—in an obedient child, and that is what we have here: "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved." Would you like to have a degree like this—"M. G. B." (Man Greatly Beloved)? It is acquired by walking the path of faith in separation from this world. How we long to see young Christians come out for Christ and take a stand for Him. It is a word for us who have gone on in the path a little longer as well. The happy path is to live devoted lives for Christ. It is good to begin the Christian life well, with purpose of heart, not in our own strength, but seeking the Lord's help to live for Him. It is not only good to begin well, but also to end well. Some begin well, but turn out of the way—they turn aside when they get old. Fellow Christian, may we be kept from our youth to old age, if God leaves us here to that, going on in the path of dependence and devotedness, so that we may hear at the end of the journey, "man greatly beloved." It is a degree we might well covet—a degree that would be to the glory of the One who died for us, and also something which we would enjoy.

Now verse 12: "Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel." The Lord Jesus spoke these words, "Fear not," to one and another of His own when He was here. The Lord would have us in His presence with the sense that He is God, but He would have us at ease in His presence. "Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words." This verse is the key to the fact or reason why he was kept waiting three full weeks. All his words were heard from the beginning, from the very first day. Verse 13 adds, "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia." Why did God allow the messenger who was dispatched with the answer to Daniel to be delayed for three full weeks? He allowed the interruption, the delay, for the exercise of Daniel's soul. Sometimes we wait on the Lord with our burden apparently unremoved day after day, month after month; perhaps even, year after year. The apostle Paul was caught up to the third heaven and saw things impossible to put into human language, and when he got back here there was given him a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble. He besought the Lord three times to take it away. The answer he got was not the one he was looking for, but it satisfied him. The answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Then he said, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." 2 Cor. 12:9.

This delay takes us behind the scenes. This tenth chapter is one of the few places in Scripture that takes you back into the unseen world. There are things unseen to our natural eyes and unheard by our ears. Even in natural things there is only a small percentage of the spectrum

we can hear with our ears. The hummingbird has a beautiful voice, but our ears are not attuned to hear it.

There is something else: There is an unseen world, and powers in the unseen world. We read in this chapter of Gabriel and Michael. These are the only two angels whose names are recorded, but we do read of those unseen angels that excel man in strength; they are God's messengers, doing His will. They exercise providential overruling in this world; they are, "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14). I am satisfied that when we get to glory we will find that many times we have been cared for through the administration of angels. There is the world in which God operates, unseen to the human eye. The Word of God speaks of the cherubim and the seraphim; these are two kinds of angels. Michael is spoken of as the archangel; how many other heavenly beings there are we cannot say, nor do we know. One of these messengers that was to do God's bidding was dispatched with the answer to Daniel's prayer. He was sent to carry this wonderful prophecy, and it is a most wonderful prophecy—infidels who have studied secular history say no man could have written it, and that it must have been written after it happened. But Daniel was the prophet and not the historian; he received the prophecy and it is filled with minute details.

There is something else in this chapter. Beside the angels that do God's bidding, there is a force in the unseen world headed by Satan. He has his angels—his ministers—that do his bidding. Perhaps he has organized his system along the lines of the government of God. The Lord Jesus said, "If Satan cast out Satan... how shall then his kingdom stand"(Matt. 12:26)? He has an organized system, and we are reading of one who withstood the messenger bringing the message to Daniel—"the prince of the kingdom of Persia." "But, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia" Verse 13. He was in combat with one of Satan's messengers. Little did Cyrus know that there was a struggle going on in the unseen world concerning his kingdom. Satan was going to frustrate God's plans if he could. He is always opposed to that which is according to the mind of God. One of God's chief messengers in the angelic host came to help Daniel.

We find Michael mentioned here, in Jude and in the 12TH chapter of Revelation. In each place we find that he is in conflict with Satan or his emissaries. In Jude 9: "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." That tells us something we would not learn from the Old Testament. Moses was on the mount and there died; and it says that God buried him. I believe we learn that he was buried by God through the instrumentality of Michael the archangel, and the devil withstood him. The devil would have no doubt influenced the children of Israel to make a shrine of his burying place; Michael withstood the devil.

If you want to know something about the glory of Satan you will find it in the 28th chapter of Ezekiel, where he is typified in the King of Tyrus; not in Isa. 14 under the name of Lucifer. Lucifer is a representation, not of Satan, but of the last king of the Revived Roman Empire. Satan is a glorious being, and Michael doesn't bring against him a railing accusation. We have no idea of the forces arraigned against us, but let us take comfort, "for there be more for us than with him." We have One on our side who is superior to all the host of Satan, but let us not forget the seriousness of the confederation opposed to our progress. The Lord said to the devil, "Get thee behind me, Satan" Luke 4:8. I do not believe that it is proper for the child of God to say that; we are told to resist the devil. And how are we to resist him? With the Word of God, just as the Lord resisted him in the wilderness. He resisted and defeated him with these three words, "It is written." He used the Word of God, not to silence Satan, but as a guide for His own conduct; and, if we use it as the guide for our conduct, Satan will flee from us.

Turn to the 12TH chapter of Revelation: "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun" (this woman is Israel), "and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child (male of might), who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.”

That should make it clear who this One is—the One of the second Psalm—the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice, we have His birth and ascension, but His death and resurrection are not mentioned here. "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels." There we find Michael in conflict with the powers of darkness again. We find also at the time of the end that Michael will stand up and be in conflict again. Some Christians would gasp with astonishment if they were told that Satan and his fallen angels are in heaven (not in the immediate presence of God), and that he is called, "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). And, there are the, "rulers of the darkness of this world;" and, "spiritual wickedness in high (or, heavenly) places." (Eph. 6:12). The time is coming when they are going to be expelled, and cast to the earth.

I would like to call attention to something in the 12TH chapter of Revelation, in connection with the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. We get an insight here into why Herod sought to kill the Lord Jesus when He was born. Herod inquired of the wise men when the star appeared, and then he sent and destroyed all the young children from two years old and under, seeking to destroy the Lord Jesus. It looked like it was that wicked man Herod, but, when we come to the 12TH of Revelation, we find the sinister power that was moving behind Herod. That shows us something of what was going on behind the scenes. We find that the dragon, Satan, stood before the woman ready to devour her child as soon as it was born. All these chapters take us behind the scenes and show us something of the struggle that is going on there. And that is going on now as well! Herod was the instrument used by Satan, and the wicked spirits in his organization are working at the seats of government. (I was thinking when the heads of government came together recently to talk things over at Geneva, and wondering how many of the wicked spirits of Satan would be there.) These are not imaginary things, or fictitious tales, but God draws aside the curtain here and there, and lets us see into the unseen.

In the book of Job we find that the trials which beset Job, while they looked to be the same as those that came to his neighbors, were actually the movings of the wicked, unseen spirits. Satan knows nothing of love, or of the power of love. Satan could raise the winds and influence the lightening; he could raise up marauders and thieves, and those things were all allowed of God. But we learn one thing clearly, and that is that not one thing can happen to a child of God without God's permission.

The Lord Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." He did not say, "I am going to keep Satan from getting you into his sieve, but He said, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." He knew that it was for Peter's good; so he got into Satan's sieve, and Satan gave him an awful shaking. Satan was only doing the Lord's work to show Peter what he was.

Brethren, it is so much better to learn our lessons in the school of God in communion than to learn them in Satan's sieve. Sometimes, for our good, God allows us to get into Satan's sieve so that we may lose our self-confidence, and learn what poor failing things we are.

Turn back now to Dan. 10:20: "Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come." The power of Greece was the next power that would arise, and would be interested in God's earthly people, the Jews. And Satan had his instruments to work at the seat of government of the kingdom of Greece.

Chapter 11, verse 1: "Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him." Turn back to Dan. 6 Darius organized his government and set up an hundred and twenty princes; he put over them three, and made Daniel chief. Here was one of the sons of Israel, one of God's earthly people, living at the seat of the government of the Medes and Persians. We find in the 11TH chapter that this angel Michael who stood to strengthen Daniel also stood to strengthen Darius. We find Darius coming to Daniel and saying, "Thy God whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee." Then, when Darius comes the next morning, he cries with a lamentable voice, "Is thy God whom thou servest continually able to deliver thee from the lions?" (His faith had waned somewhat in the night.) When he finds Daniel alive and unharmed, he commands and they take Daniel up out of the den. They had not framed their law to preclude taking him up. I connect this 6th chapter, the account of Darius's faith and the interest he showed in Daniel's welfare, with the angel that stood up to strengthen Daniel in chapter 11, verse 1.

Read the book of Esther: When Haman got to be the head of the government, he issued and signed the edict that all the Jews be destroyed. That was Satan working behind the scenes against God's earthly people. If Haman's scheme had been achieved, it would have meant the undoing of the whole human race. Behind it all was the struggle-not only of Satan's emissaries, but there was the angel of God. We are apt to coast along and think that things are just as we see them; but there are powers of the unseen world.

Friends, these are realities! It is not for us to be discouraged, but it should make us sober as we walk through this world. May we know something of walking in the spirit that characterized Daniel—realizing our sad part in the failure, interceding for the people of God and seeking grace to go on in obedience to His Word. Obedience to the Word of God if it takes us into the path of separation is one thing, but if we lift up our heads and seek to be something, that is another thing. Let us put pride far from us.

Shall we be discouraged by the powers of darkness? Can they touch us? The Lord might allow Satan to touch our goods, and even our flesh, for our good. He might allow us, as He did Peter, to get into Satan's sieve to give us a rough shaking in order to get rid of pride and self-confidence. But, can he really touch us?

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers" (I take it that "principalities, nor powers" refer to these unseen powers arraigned against us), "nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. 8:38, 39. Not one thing, however great—Satan included—can ever touch the life and security of the saint of God. And God is not going to allow Satan or his emissary to put forth his hand and touch you without His allowing it. He may allow it, but it will always be for our good. Remember, you may have the same thing happen to you as to your unsaved neighbor; but it will have a different character with the child of God than with the unsaved neighbor, as we saw from the book of Job.

Let us seek grace to have purpose of heart and devotedness if left here, to be kept in the path of faith until the moment we hear the shout. It is not far off!

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