

"Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God." Those inspirational words were spoken May 31, 1792 by the man known as the "Father of Modern Missions," William Carey. Few would have predicted early on the kind of impact Carey would have on the world, by the grace of God. Carey was the son of an English weaver, and had little formal schooling. At 17, he took up the trade of shoemaking. Through the influence of a fellow apprentice, he trusted Christ, and immediately developed a burden for his unsaved boss. That burden would eventually spread and lead him to take the gospel around the world.

William Carey was a persistent plodder. He kept going when others gave up. He became a missionary to India and faced many difficulties in his early years there, such as disease and hard living conditions. Shortly after reaching India, his five-year-old son, Peter, died of dysentery. After seven years of faithful ministry, Carey could not point to a single Indian convert!

Most of us would have given up and gone home. Not William Carey. He persevered and eventually saw the visible fruit of his faithfulness.

Persistence. It's a rare quality in this "Generation X" society, isn't it? The children of baby-boomers, much like their parents, want quick results. They have a marriage squabble today, and they're ready to throw in the towel tomorrow.

Calvin Coolidge said, "Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent."

While I would question that it is *omnipotent*, there's no question that persistence is vital. The truth is, we'll never succeed in the Christian life without persistence. That applies in lots of areas, but especially when it comes to seeking God in prayer. We need to be persistent in prayer. Why is that? We'll find out this morning from the Word of God in Daniel 10.

Proposition: According to the experience of Daniel in chapter 10:12-21, we learn two reasons we need to be persistent in prayer.

- I. Reason #1: We struggle (12-14).
 - A. Daniel had a struggle (12).
 1. He persisted in seeking truth.
 2. He persisted in humbling himself.
 - B. The angel had a struggle (13).
 1. An unseen battle is raging.
 2. Angels minister for God.
 3. Prayer makes a difference.
 - C. The Jews will have a struggle (14).
- II. Reason #2: God supplies (15-21).

***Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

- A. The first touch enabled him to stand (10).
- B. The second touch enabled him to speak (15-17).
- C. The third touch enabled him to hear (18-21).
 - 1. God knew what he needed.
 - 2. God gave him exactly what he needed.

Lessons: We need persistence in seeking God because...

- 1. We are weak and insufficient.
- 2. God is sufficient.
- 3. God helps those who admit their need for Him.

I. Reason #1: We struggle (12-14).

This may sound like a strange admission from a pastor, but it shouldn't. The Christian life is *not* easy. It's not for me, nor is it for you. Living for God is not easy. Prayer is not easy. It involves struggle. But that's nothing new. As we take a look at the biblical account in verses 12-14, we'll see three struggles.

A. Daniel had a struggle (12). I must remind you that Daniel was a man in his 80's, and that he'd been walking with God for many decades. He'd been a civil servant for most of his life, and as he got older, one issue burned with greater passion in his heart: What was going to happen to God's chosen people, the Jews?

God had sentenced them to 70 years of captivity because of their disobedience, and the sentence had been served. A remnant had returned from Babylon to the Promised Land. Great, but Daniel was still perplexed by two things. One, a large number of Jews refused to leave their comfort zone and go back to Jerusalem, and two, the conditions in Jerusalem were horrible.

It wasn't just the condition of God's people that bothered Daniel. Fundamentally, it was reputation of God because of His people. God put His name of the line when He chose Israel to be His exhibit-A in the world.

For Daniel, the struggle was this. What is the Lord God going to do with His people? What does the future hold for the Jews? The answer came for Daniel in the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia (1). God gave Daniel a vision. To be precise, it was the fourth vision that Daniel received and recorded in chapters 7-12. What's intriguing is that before telling us the content of the vision, God's Word devotes an entire chapter to prepare us for it (ch 10).

In our last study, we saw that Daniel's preparation involved three weeks of mourning and fasting (2-3). His mourning was followed by marveling which took place when he saw a heavenly visitor that looked like the Son of God (4-6). Daniel instinctively fell to his face as a dead man (7-9), and stayed there until an angel touched him and picked him up (10-11; the first of three touches in this chapter).

Let's jump into the narrative. In v 12, Daniel is trembling before the angel. "Then said he unto me, 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."

We'll talk about the angel in a moment, but first notice what the angel's words indicate about Daniel's struggle. His comments in v 12 reveal that Daniel persisted in two ways.

1. *He persisted in seeking truth.* For three weeks, Daniel had mourned and sought the face of God, and engaged in two activities (see the two phrases). First, according to the angel (NIV), "You set your mind to gain understanding." Daniel was confused and perplexed, so he took his struggle to God. He needed understanding.

By the way, where do you turn when you struggle? Your friends? Your bank account? Your family? Or, like Daniel, do you turn to God?

2. *He persisted in humbling himself.* The angel said that Daniel "chastened" himself before his God. He humbled himself for a three week period of prayer and fasting and seeking God. And God answered. James wrote later, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up (James 4:10)."

Three things happened as the result of Daniel's persistence in seeking God. One, God heard him *from day one*. Don't miss that. Why pray when God doesn't seem to answer? Because whether we realize it or not, God is listening. The second result of Daniel's persistence was that God sent an angel to help Daniel. And thirdly, a battle took place in the heavens. The angel was resisted for 21 days. Which reveals the second struggle.

B. The angel had a struggle (13). Have you ever been touched by an angel? CBS has a weekly show on Saturday evenings entitled "Touched By An Angel." The storyline involves an angel named Tess and her assistant, Monica, who appears as a young woman with an Irish accent, both of whom are sent by God to help people in their struggles.

Do angels really exist? Certainly. What are they really like? CBS isn't inspired, but the Word of God is. Right here we learn three things about angels and the angelic world.

1. *An unseen battle is raging.* From day one, God heard Daniel's prayer and dispatched an angel to come to Daniel. But in His sovereign plan, God permitted a 21-day delay as the angel describes in v 13 (NIV), "But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia."

The obvious question is, who was this "prince of the Persian kingdom"? It's quite apparent that it wasn't Cyrus. In fact, it wasn't a man at all. If one angel was able to slay 185,000 men as happened in Isaiah 37:36, surely no one man could hinder an angel. So it wasn't Cyrus that was out in the heavenlies resisting the angel?

Who was, then? It was a fallen, wicked angel, under the direction of Satan. In the New Testament, wicked angels are identified as "demons," "spirits" (Mt 12:45), "unclean spirits" (Mk 1:23-27), and "seducing spirits" (1 Tim 4:1).

The New Testament also uses (some 8 times) the term "principalities." Paul states in Romans 8:38, "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers...shall be able to separate us from the love of God." Apparently there are ranks of evil beings which Eph 6:12 calls "the rulers of the darkness of this world." These demonic creatures influence the nations of the world.

Daniel 12:1 indicates that the good angel, Michael, protects the nation of Israel. On the other hand, the Scriptures indicate that the devil has his rulers of darkness that influence the other nations. V 20 verifies that Persia had one, and so did Greece. Jesus later referred to Satan as "the prince of this world" (Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Satan exercises demonic influence in the countries of this world, like China, Iraq, Germany, and even the United States. True, his time is running out, but for now, an unseen battle is raging. What else is true about angels?

2. *Angels minister for God.* We read this in Hebrews 1:13-14, "But to which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all *ministering spirits, sent forth to minister* for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Angels do God's bidding in helping His people.

It's interesting to see that angels work together. When the angel that God sent to give the vision to Daniel was held up by the demon, another angel intervened. We're told his name, Michael, which means "who is like God." We're told his rank, "one of the chief princes." Michael seems to be one of the most powerful of God's angels, and with his aid, the messenger to Daniel got through.

Ponder this thought. Good angels work together in harmony for God's kingdom work. Perhaps that's the idea behind Jesus' instruction on prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth *as it is in heaven.*" If powerful angels in heaven are willing to help each other, free of rivalry, shouldn't we be willing to do the same in the Church on earth?

3. *Prayer makes a difference.* "The prayer of a righteous man avails much (James 5:16)." During the 21 days Daniel was fasting and praying, though unseen to him, a ferocious battle was taking place.

You say, "Can Satanic forces really hinder angelic forces?" The answer is, only if God permits it. Gleason Archer offers this helpful insight (125), "While God can, of course, override the united resistance of all the forces of hell if he chooses to do so, he accords to demons certain limited powers of obstruction and rebellion somewhat like those he allows humans."

God allowed one of His angels to be hindered for 21 days, and then He permitted His angel Michael to overcome the barrier. Why? We don't know entirely, but here's a possibility. He was testing the persistence of Daniel.

Day one, Daniel prayed. No answer. Day two, he prayed, still no answer. A delayed answer does not mean no answer. Daniel kept praying and seeking God. Jesus taught His disciples that "they should always pray and not give up (Luke 18:1)."

You say, "Why pray if God already knows?" A. W. Tozer wrote this in How To Pray (49-50), "Some would have us believe that it shows unbelief to pray twice for the same thing, that we ought to 'take it' the first time that we ask. Doubtless there are times when we are able through faith in the Word or the leading of the Holy Spirit to *claim* the first time that which we have asked of God; but beyond question there are other times when we must pray again and again and again for the same thing before we get our answer. Those who have gotten beyond praying twice for the same thing have gotten beyond their Master (Matt. 26:44). George Muller prayed for two men daily for upwards of sixty years. One of these men was converted shortly before his death, I think at the last service that George Muller held, the other was converted within a year after his death. One of the great needs of the present day is men and women who will not only start out to pray for things, but pray on and on and on until they obtain that which they seek from the Lord."

I want to point out a third struggle we can see in Daniel 10.

C. The Jews will have a struggle (14). Here was what the angel told Daniel (14), "Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days; for yet the vision is for many days." Why had the angel come to Daniel? To explain to him the future of his people. Don't miss that. The vision which we'll see in chapter 11 pertains to the destiny of the Jews, namely what will happen to the Jews in the last days.

We can spare ourselves a big headache when it comes to interpreting the prophetic vision that follows by underscoring this point. The vision pertains to Israel. And Israel is not the Church. They are two distinct entities, as dispensationalism affirms. Though the Church flows out of Israel, the Bible distinguishes the Church from Israel (see 1 Cor 10:32). Paul called the Church a "mystery" for it was not clearly predicted in the Old Testament (Col 1:26).

To say it plainly, the prophecy Daniel is about to learn has to do with what's going to happen, not to us as the Church, but to the Jews. The vision goes beyond our "Church Age" to the final period in world history before Christ returns, the period of tribulation.

Have the Jews struggled in the past? Yes, like no other people. But their struggle is not over, and will not be until the day when the Messiah returns.

Why is it that we need to be persistent in prayer? The first reason is that, like Daniel and the angels and the Jews, we struggle. We need God's help.

II. Reason #2: God supplies (15-21).

God supplied what Daniel needed as evidenced by three touches.

A. The first touch enabled him to stand (10). In v 10, Daniel felt the first touch. He says, "A hand touched me, and set me trembling on my hands and knees." When Daniel saw the vision, he says he lost all strength, became deathly pale, and fell to the ground (8-9). The answer from God had arrived, but it was so overwhelming, Daniel couldn't handle it. Until he felt the touch of God's messenger and stood up trembling (11).

B. The second touch enabled him to speak (15-17). Listen to the LB account of verses 15-17, "All this time I was looking down, unable to speak a word. Then someone--he looked like a man--touched my lips and I could talk again; and I said to the messenger from heaven, 'Sir, I am terrified by your appearance and have no strength. How can such a person as I even talk to you? For my strength is gone and I can hardly breathe.'"

When Daniel saw the angel, he was scared speechless. But God's servant extended a first touch, and Daniel could stand. Then a second angel graced him with a second touch, so that Daniel could speak.

The first words Daniel uttered remind us of Jeremiah who objected (Jer 1:5-9), "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak." "Then the LORD put forth His hand, and *touched* my mouth." Isaiah had a similar experience. When the prophet of God saw the seraphim around God's throne, he cried, "Woe is me! I've got a dirty mouth (I am a man of unclean lips)!" Remember what happened? One of the seraphim took a hot coal from the altar and *touched* Isaiah's mouth. Then Isaiah could speak for God.

Do you have trouble speaking up for Jesus Christ? Then become a person of persistent prayer. Spend time in awe in the holy presence of God. When God touches your lips in private, you can't help but speak for Him in public.

C. The third touch enabled him to hear (18-21). Remember, the angel is about to deliver the vision and its interpretation to Daniel, but there's a problem. Daniel is in no condition to hear it! He's still petrified with fear. The third touch enabled him to hear.

Verses 18-19 (NIV) record what happened, "Again the one who looked like a man *touched* me and gave me strength. 'Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed,' he said. 'Peace! Be strong now; be strong.' When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said,

'Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength.' [Sounds like the boy Samuel, doesn't it? Here's the appropriate way to approach every message from God, whether it's your quiet time or a Sunday School lesson or a sermon, "Speak Lord, I am listening!"]"

And verses 20-21, "So he said, 'Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come; but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince.)'"

Daniel was now ready to receive the vision God sent him.

You know something--we couldn't even listen to God's Word this morning were it not for His grace. It would be like standing in front of the roaring engines of a Boeing 747--we'd be blown away by the speech of God if He didn't condescend to us, and "tone it down."

Are you grateful that we serve a God Who supplies? When we struggle, He supplies. He did for Daniel in two ways.

1. *God knew what he needed.* Isn't it amazing to watch God take a person from where he is to where he needs to be. Just verses earlier, Daniel was on his face, full of fear, trembling, speechless. Now he's ready to receive God's Word. What made the difference? God knew what he needed, and...

2. *God gave him exactly what he needed.* God, through His messengers, touched Daniel at his very point of need. When cowering in fear, God touched Daniel so he could stand. When mute, God touched the prophet so he could speak. When unable to process the revelation, God touched His man so he could hear.

God delights in supplying the need of His people so they can glorify Him. Moses could say from experience (Ex 15:2), "The LORD is my strength." The Psalmist recorded the testimony of his life (27:1), "The LORD is the strength of my life." Ezra announced (7:28), "I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my God was upon me."

My friend, this can be your testimony, too. God knows what *you* need, and He will give you exactly what you need. But you must seek Him with all your heart.

Lessons: We need persistence in seeking God because...

There are three lessons we must not miss from Daniel 10.

1. *We are weak and insufficient.* There will be no one in heaven who is there because he or she *deserves* to be there. God hates pride, but He delights in the humble. Are you a proud person? Are you impressed with yourself?

You say, "Well shouldn't I have a positive self-esteem?" Is that what the Bible says? Friend, what you need is a correct self-esteem. So do I. You need to see yourself as God does. We are weak and insufficient.

2. *God is sufficient.* How good it is to know that He is! Last week, as I knelt by the bedside of my uncle who is dying, I asked him if he had any fear. He replied, "A little. I'm still fearful that He's forgiven me." How good to be able to share with my uncle that we can be forgiven because of what God has done for us in Christ, not based on what we do for God. God is sufficient.

3. *God helps those who admit their need for Him.* Henry Ward Beecher once said, "The difference between perseverance and obstinacy is, that one often comes from a strong will, and the other from a strong won't." Are you willing today to admit to God

that you need Him?

Response: Listen carefully to the following, "Many churches today are marked by a well-organized, heavily staffed, and adequately financed impotency. This manifest weakness lies in the fact that too many church leaders have cut themselves off from the source of power; they are out of touch with God. The need of the hour is a fresh touch from Heaven, and I believe this touch can come to every believer in Christ who wants it and will seek it. When it comes it will not be the touch of an angel but the touch of the indwelling Holy Spirit. When we confess our sins and cease to grieve and quench Him, a new and strange power will possess us, providing a divine endowment and an enabling unmatched by human cleverness."

With those words, Lehman Strauss (312-313) has hit the nail on the head. Do you need a fresh touch from God? Is your life stale with sin? The solution is to repent of your sin, and to seek God through His Son, Jesus Christ, by the enablement of His Spirit. The following song will give you an opportunity to pray and ask Him for a fresh touch.

Hymn of Response: #380 "Just a Closer Walk with Thee"

Let's bow our heads for a time of reflection. Do you have a close walk with God? If not, why not? Perhaps it's because you've forgotten how much you need Him. My friend, He alone is sufficient. We are not. We are weak and needy. We can't save ourselves. Nor can we live for God on our own strength after we've been saved. We can't raise families to God's honor. Yet God helps those who admit their need for Him. I invite you to do that right now.

Time of Response in Prayer

Have you ever admitted to God the truth about your spiritual condition? The Bible says we are all sinners who are born under the sentence of God's wrath. We can't reach up to God. He must reach down to us. Through Jesus Christ, He does. If you will repent of your sin, and believe that Jesus Christ died and rose again to take care of your sin problem, God will save you today. Call out to Him now.

The truth is, we need the Lord every day. We need to choose today that we're going to depend on God and live for God every day this coming week. The following song is an expression of that. It's a prayer-song.

Closing Prayer Song: #55 "Day by Day--A Prayer"

As we leave the room, let's do so in silent reflection while we contemplate our need for God. If you would like to spend further time in prayer, or have someone pray with you, please remain behind and our pastor's prayer partners will come to you.