

Message Three
Daniel—
A Pattern of a Person Used by God to Turn the Age (2)

Scripture Reading: Dan. 1:3-8; 6:10; 9:23; 10:11, 19

I. Daniel joined himself to God's desire through God's Word—Dan. 9:1-4; Deut. 17:18-20; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Eph. 6:17-18; Psa. 119:11, 24:

- A. God's living word works in us to separate us from the world and move us out of our divisive self into the oneness of the Triune God—John 17:17, 21; Eph. 5:26.
- B. Daily we need to practice coming to the Word to have the Triune God as truth infused into us according to the following life principles:
 - 1. We must open our entire being to the Lord for the inner shining of the divine light and the supplying of the divine life; the one who experiences the greatest amount of transformation is the one who is absolutely open to the Lord—Psa. 119:105; Prov. 20:27; Psa. 139:23-24.
 - 2. We must seek the Lord with all our heart—119:2; Mark 12:30.
 - 3. We must deal with anything which separates us from the Lord—Acts 24:16; 2 Tim. 1:3a; 1 John 1:9; cf. Ezek. 1:22,26.
 - 4. We must humble ourselves before the Lord, putting aside our self-confidence and self-assurance and looking to Him for His mercy and grace—Isa. 66:1-2; 1 Pet. 5:5.
 - 5. We must exercise our spirit to pray over and with God's word and exercise our whole being to muse on His word—Eph. 6:17-18; Psa. 119:15-16.

II. Daniel was a man of prayer with an excellent spirit, a man fearing God, honoring God, exalting God, and living under God's rule in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens, the ruling of the heavens—Dan. 6:10; 9:1-4, 17; 5:12, 14; 6:3; 5:22-23; 4:25-26, 32:

- A. Fearing God means wanting God, desiring single-heartedly to keep His will, being fully submissive to Him, wanting nothing of ourselves, walking not according to our will, seeing not ourselves, and seeing God's greatness alone—5:22-23; Psa. 25:14; 86:11; Isa. 11:2.
- B. To honor God is to live and walk by the Spirit for Christ's exaltation in order to honor others by ministering the Spirit to them—Judg. 9:9; Phil. 1:19-21a; 2 Cor. 3:6, 8.
- C. To live under God's rule is to be filled with His ruling presence of righteousness, holiness, and glory for the carrying out of His eternal covenant in dispensing Himself into us to make us the wise exhibition of all that He is—Gen. 9:8-17; Ezek. 1:26-28'; Rev. 4:3; 21:18-20; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 3:10-11.
- D. Prayer in the Spirit through the exercise of our spirit brings us under God's ruling presence for the carrying out of His economy—Rev. 4:1-3; Eph. 6:17-18:
 - 1. The highest expression of a man who cooperates with God is in prayer; God carries out His economy on earth through His faithful channels of prayer—Acts 6:4.
 - 2. Prayer is the lifeline in the Lord's recovery; the more Satan tries to frustrate our prayer, the more we should pray—Dan. 6:10.
 - 3. Daniel depended on prayer to do what man could not do, and he depended on prayer to understand what man could not understand—2:17-19; 9:1-4.

4. Daniel's prayer was totally for God, not for himself—v.2b; Jer. 25:11; Dan. 9:17; 1 Kings 8:48.

III. Daniel was a self-sacrificing person with the spirit of martyrdom—Dan. 6:10-11; cf. 3:17-18:

- A. Everyone whom God uses to turn the age is afraid of only one thing, that is, to offend God and lose His presence—2 Cor. 5:9-10; cf. Psa. 51:11; Josh. 7:4.
- B. If we contact the Christ typified by the vine and experience His sacrificing life, He will energize us to live a life of sacrifice, producing happiness for God and for others—Judg. 9:13; Matt. 9:17; Rom. 12:1; Eph. 5:2; 2 Cor. 1:24:
 1. In ourselves we are not able to live a life of sacrifice, for our life is a natural life, a selfish life—Job 2:4; Matt. 16:25:
 - a. Christ's love of affection constrains us to live and to die for Him—2 Cor. 5:14-15; Rom. 14:7-9.
 - b. Christ's love makes the believers martyrs for Him—Rev. 2:10; 12:11; Rom. 8:35-37.
 2. If we experience Christ as the wine-producing vine, we will be filled with joy in the Lord—John 15:11; Acts 5:41; 13:52; Phil. 3:1a; 4:4; Psa. 43:4.
 3. By experiencing Christ as the wine-producing vine and by being filled with Him as the new wine, we may become a drink offering in Him and with Him to be poured out for God's satisfaction and for God's building—Gen. 35:14; Exo. 29:40-41; Phil. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6.
- C. The Body is versus the self, and the self is the enemy of the Body; we should deny ourselves to enjoy and live by Christ for the sake of the Body—Matt. 16:24; 1 Cor. 1:9; 12:27.

MESSAGE THREE READING EXCERPTS

THE SECOND CHARACTERISTIC— BEING JOINED TO GOD’S DESIRE THROUGH HIS WORD

Daniel was not only a person who read God’s Word regularly, but a person who was joined to God’s Word. This is the second characteristic. He did not read God’s Word for the purpose of finding out some knowledge or merely for finding out God’s will. Rather, he read to receive and to keep God’s commandments. When he read from the book of Jeremiah that God had ordained seventy years of captivity for the Israelites, and that after seventy years God would turn back to bless them, he immediately fasted and prayed. He did not read the Scripture in a dead way. As soon as he touched God’s desire through the Word, he immediately joined himself to that desire.

This was the way he read the Bible. This was why he could be touched by every word, by the light, and by the teaching in the Bible. After he read the book of Leviticus, he could no longer eat the unclean food. After he read the book of Jeremiah, he could not help but fast and pray for the restoration of God’s people. Whichever point he read, he joined himself to that point. Brothers and sisters, please remember that a person who turns the age for God must possess such a characteristic. When we come to God’s Word, we have to learn not to study for some scholarship or for some knowledge, but to find out God’s desire from His Word. Whenever we find out God’s desire, we must immediately join ourselves to that desire.

Brothers and sisters, this was Daniel’s characteristic in those days. He was not like many Bible readers who treat Bible reading as an objective matter. This kind of Bible reading cannot touch God’s desire. Because you read the Bible apart from the Bible, the Bible can never get into you. Bible reading is useless to such persons. To read the Bible, one must join himself and his living to God’s Word. Any time you find out God’s desire from His Word, you

must immediately join yourselves to this desire with fear and trembling.

THE THIRD CHARACTERISTIC— COOPERATING WITH GOD THROUGH PRAYERS

Daniel had a third characteristic. He was a man who was always praying. His prayers were not at all common. His prayers were prayers that turned the age. Every time he encountered some crucial matter, he prayed before God. He believed absolutely in prayer. He believed in prayer because he believed in God and not in himself.

The book of Daniel records Daniel as a person who could pray. What Satan wanted to deal with particularly was Daniel’s prayer. His prayer touched God’s heart and was able to fulfill God’s plan. Satan purposely wanted to deal with his prayer and to destroy his prayer. Chapter six especially shows us that Satan wanted to damage this praying person through the men under Satan. At least he tried to destroy his prayer and to render him unable to pray.

One remembers the story of King Darius who decreed that within thirty days, anyone who petitioned anything of any God or man besides the king would be cast into the den of lions. Satan’s subtle strategy was to utilize the men around King Darius to deal with Daniel, to stop Daniel from praying, and eventually to ensnare Daniel, the man of prayer. How did Daniel respond to this? He still prayed as usual and was not at all threatened by it. The Bible is very clear: “Three times daily he knelt on his knees and prayed and gave thanks before his God, because he had always done so previously” (Dan. 6:10). Nothing could stop Daniel’s praying. If Daniel had not prayed, Daniel would have failed. As long as Satan could destroy and stop Daniel’s prayer, Satan would win. Hence, Daniel’s prayer was like a stronghold on a battlefield.

In chapter nine we see that as soon as Daniel read and found out God’s desire for the Israelites to return from captivity after seventy years were fulfilled, he immediately fasted and

prayed. Some have the wrong concept that since God had spoken and ordained that the Israelites would return from captivity after seventy years, why was there any more need for prayer? Had God not spoken that He would bring them back? Indeed it is true that God had promised to bring back the Israelites after the fulfillment of seventy years. Yet there was still the need for man to pray. If God could not find a man to pray for this on earth, it would be hard to bring to pass the return of the Israelites after the seventy years. Daniel met God's need. He was truly a man who cooperated with God through his prayer.

In chapter ten we see that not only was Daniel a praying person, but a persistent praying person. He asked God for understanding and for direction. He prayed and prayed steadfastly. The Bible tells us that he received God's answer on the first day of his petition. From the first day, God had answered his prayer by sending an angel to show him what would happen to the children of Israel. Yet when the angel came to the air, he met Satan's prince who withstood him. There was a battle. In other words, when God in heaven was about to join Himself to man on earth, He met Satan's resistance, and there was a twenty-one day battle. Although God had already heard Daniel's prayer, Satan resisted in the air and would not allow God's answer to reach Daniel. Nevertheless, Daniel was a persistent praying person. He persisted in prayer for three seven-day periods. As a result, the angel came to tell him how God had heard his prayer and how He would deal with His people.

All of this shows us that Daniel was a praying person. He prayed every day, and he prayed for everything. Once I asked a young brother if he prayed. He said, "I pray every day." I asked, "What time of the day do you pray?" He said, "Three times a day at mealtime I pray." I would say that prayers at mealtime do not count as prayer. There is not much use for that kind of prayer because it is prayer for the food. But Daniel's prayer was not at all for the food. He

always prayed with a single purpose and never prayed for himself.

Daniel's prayer reached the highest peak. He asked God to do something for Himself. He prayed, "Cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary that has been desolated, for the Lord's sake" (Dan. 9:17). I hope that we would circle the words "for the Lord's sake." We can see that his prayer was totally for God and not for himself. It seems as if he was saying to God, "My supplication here today is not for myself but for You. Even though I am asking You to do something, it is not for myself, but for You." This was a very special prayer; it was also the highest prayer. Our prayers are ninety-nine and nine tenths percent for ourselves. Very few of them are for God. Only a person like Daniel, who prayed to God single-heartedly, can be used by Him to turn the age.

THE FOURTH CHARACTERISTIC— NOT CARING FOR ONE'S LIFE

There is still a fourth characteristic. Daniel was a person who would sacrifice himself to be martyred. From the first chapter to the last, the book of Daniel shows us that a person who is under God's hand and who is used by Him to turn the age is a self-sacrificing person. Every incident and fact shows us that he was a person who did not care for his own life. For example, when he chose to eat vegetables only, he did not necessarily have the assurance that he would be strong. If the more he ate, the slimmer he became, he would be killed by the king of Babylon. Yet he cared neither for life nor for death. He knew that the unclean food, the food sacrificed to idols, could not enter into his mouth, that he would not be defiled, and that he would keep God's word. Because of this word, he was willing to lose even his life.

Brothers and sisters, all those who are afraid of what might happen to them, who are afraid of things that come from one direction or another, of this and of that, cannot be used by God to turn the age. Please do not misunderstand me. Let me say it in a plain way. Everyone whom God uses to turn the age is

afraid neither of heaven nor of hell. He fears nothing. He is only afraid of one thing, that is, to offend God and to lose His presence. Anyone who hides, withdraws, withers, and changes his mind when confronted with difficulties is not of much use in God's hands. God cannot use cowards. All those whom God uses to turn the age are bold ones. They are not bold in a wild or natural way, but bold because of their fear of God and their courage to confront difficulties.

In the past I have read a little of the record of Martin Luther's Reformation. I was most touched by the scene at his trial. Those who sat in front of him were kings and noblemen, yet Luther stood before them fearlessly. He spoke a firm word to their face: "If what I preach is contrary to this Bible, I am willing to die, but if what I preach is according to this Bible, no one can kill me!" Such majestic words caused even those who loved him and were concerned for him to tremble. His words were too majestic. He was a man who was not afraid of death. This was why God was able to use him to turn the age. Consider Daniel and his three friends. They did not care for their own lives at all. Listen to the words of Daniel's three friends. How resolute and majestic they were! Although the king of Babylon seduced them in the most cunning and devious way, what did they answer? They said, "O Nebuchadnezzar,...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the blazing furnace of fire, and He will deliver us out of your hand....But if He does not,...we will not serve your gods nor worship the golden image that you have set up." Do you not remember the record of the Bible? When Nebuchadnezzar heard these words, he was full of fury, and the countenance of his face was changed toward them. Right away he commanded that the furnace be made seven times hotter than it was usually heated. Even the men who lifted them into the furnace were slain by the flames. The three of them would rather be bound and cast into a fiery furnace than to submit to the king. If they had been cowardly and afraid of death, surely they could not have testified for God at all that day and

could not have been used by God to turn the age.
(*Men Who Turn the Age*, chapter 2)