

CCH sermon 10th July 2022 Daniel 10. Spiritual Warfare.

let's re read v1 p896 PRAY.

- I'd like to draw your attention this morning to the fact that **we are in a massive invisible battle!**
 - ▲ Trog's do you ever see the scenes of fighting in Ukraine and think that war is long way away, to switch off our TV and make a cup of tea thinking that we are living in peacetime.
 - Well I have some shocking news, we are in a spiritual battle.
 - Jon pointed us to Eph 6 at the start which tells us our battle is not against flesh and blood- this battle is not about taking up to take up guns and tanks, nor is it a political battle (though his battle rages in the corridors of power) but it's fought by prayer and the gospel spiritually.
- Ch10-12 of Daniel comprises the last and longest vision of the book
 - and it tells us all around us there is an **invisible** cosmic battle being fought for the advance of the Kingdom of God.
- Some may be sceptical about this kind of language (and want the volume turned down), others wish that they would hear more (and want the volume turned up).
 - There are always two extremes in spiritual warfare to avoid-
 - seeing spiritual attack behind every bad thing that happens
 - Or the opposite danger (which perhaps we in the west are more in danger of) and that is
 - ignoring the reality of Satan and the powers of darkness.
- **v1** is written **about** Daniel (whereas the rest of the 3 chapters are written **by** Daniel) and so it stands alone as a sort of summary of what's coming up.
 - 1st year of Cyrus- it's 536BC.
 - a **GREAT WAR**- despite the question over exactly how to translate that, That's certainly what we get played out in chapters 11 and 12- a vision of the comings and goings of different nations (relating closely to the superpowers in the 2nd Century BC) but behind the scenes there are spiritual forces opposing God and his people.
- We're only going to look at ch10 today, which is actually a kind of extended sermon intro- chapters 11 and 12 next week with Matt will be the actual vision.
- But as we study this preliminary material before the vision, we get at least 3 reminders for us in our part in the spiritual battle for the gospel.

1) THE PRAYER THAT GROUNDS US (v2-3, 12)

v2,3 Daniel's experience starts with prayer.

- It doesn't read like that initially, it looks like the combination of a **funeral**, a new **weight watchers diet** and a change in Daniels' **toiletry purchases**.
 - But these (as elsewhere in the book and the Bible) are all things associated with a time of intense prayer and fasting. Practical and Physical activity mirroring the Spiritual activity and spiritual seriousness.
- And if there's any doubt v12 refers back to this period. **v12**
 - Daniel has been humbling himself and talking to God.
 - And wonderfully, even though the response he gets is 3 weeks later, v12 a train of events were set into motion the moment that he prayed. **v12**.
 - There's no "your call matters to us, you are being held in a queue, it's going to be an hour until you speak to a human being, and a week until you get your sim card unblocked". There is an immediate response.
- Daniel models to us where our part in spiritual warfare begins.
 - Answer = on our knees.
 - In sustained, heartfelt, pleading with God.
- We tend to think in our scientific and academically driven culture that all that you can see is all that there is. Maybe you aren't a Xn as you tune in this morning.
 - people and politicians, journeys and jobs, summertime, sunshine and sports matches, strawberries.
 - NO wonder many think, "eat drink be merry for tomorrow we die!"
- But there's more. So much more going on.
 - There is a spiritual world, a "heaven", A true and living God, an enemy of the people of God, powers of darkness.
 - Just speak to Diego and Andy or John over coffee of their missionary experiences and what they have seen of the spiritual realm.
 - Their stories will convince you there is an unseen world.
- And prayer lifts us above the seen realities to what is unseen.
- Paul says 2 cor 4:18, *"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal"*.
- As Spurgeon put it, Prayer moves the hand that moves the World.
- I know there's a mystery there. God is still in 100% control, yet he wants us to pray, and our prayers make a difference.

- And our lack of prayer means things don't happen *"You do not have because you do not ask"* James 4:2
- ▲ This book "Warriors of Ethiopia" is a marvellous account of an Australian missionary's time in Ethiopia in the last Century (Richard McLellan) and the evangelists that God raised up to reach the various tribespeople of the Omo River.
- You can't read it without being convinced of the power of the spiritual battle that rages as Satan seeks to oppose the spread of the gospel.
- But you also can't read it without being convinced of the absolute centrality of prayer in God's purposes for that battle.
- There's a time when Richard was called out by Christians to bring the gospel to a witchdoctor. He set out early in the morning with 3 others on the 14 hour mule journey. It was a horrendous journey during which he nearly died, and it felt like everything was going against them. The rains came down, the river crossings were treacherous, several of the mules got lame and Richard ended up having to go on his own to the village as the darkness of night descended.
- Richard was lost and found himself alone before Feltamo, one of the most feared and hated witchdoctors of the area, a servant of satan, who stood before him with a spear in a raised hand ready to kill. He had hardly ever experienced such feelings of darkness and evil. He said the darkness was like black velvet pressing on him. He prayed for protection.
- He shouted out "serro, peace" to the man and asked him to guide him to the village. Custom demanded that Feltamo do that.
- What he didn't know was that for years Wagaso, an old friend of Feltamo had been praying faithfully for the witchdoctor, and for the next 2 days Feltamo the witchdoctor listened in and hung on every word that Richard said about Jesus, more powerful than demons who alone was strong enough to break down the wall of sin that separated sinners from God.
- At sunset the next day, Feltamo could hold it no longer, and stood up and said "Now I believe, I believe God's word, Jesus is stronger than Satan. I want to walk the Jesus Road, God forgive my sins! I renounce Satan and take Jesus with my two hands".
- **Next Wednesday is the Church Prayer meeting. We don't put this on to take a break from lifegroups and to mix up the programme.**

- We do this because we believe that our very frail human words to God make a difference in the spiritual realm.
- We do this because we are in a spiritual battle for the souls of the people around us that rages as fiercely as **in animistic Ethiopia**.
- You only need to look at the way in which public opinion in this country and in the US is turning against Christianity and Christian values to see how Satan is having a field day.
- Just in this last week I've been conscious of the battle raging for the souls of young men and women I know who are teetering on the brink of decision about whether they will follow the crowd or throw their lot in with Jesus. And potentially a massive spiritual battle can rage over even the decision between going on camp and earning some holiday money.
- In our own denomination a battle rages for whether we will listen to God or culture. It's not just an unimportant difference of opinion, it's a life or death situation deciding whether to bless someone's sin.
- **So can I plead with you** that you join the prayer meeting on zoom or in person if you possibly can. **Can I plead with you** to resist the voice that says it doesn't matter if I don't turn up to the Monday zoom prayer meeting- others will be there. **Can I plead with you** that you spend some time each day praying for your loved ones and for your church.
 - As I said in previous weeks, it's a battle to get down to pray, and to choose prayer over the whatsapp or 5 minutes extra in bed.
 - But just think what a difference 5 minutes of prayer could make to your day, and your preparedness for speaking up for Christ.
 - You might know the old phrase "*Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees*". It was written by a hymn writer, William Cowper who lived for a time in Huntingdon, a man wracked with doubts and chronic mental health, and who attempted suicide, but was wonderfully used by God alongside the ministry of John Newton in writing hymns and in the abolition of the slave trade.
- The prayer that grounds us. Well Daniel is about to go from having his feet on the ground, to his whole body on the ground....

2) THE REVELATION THAT FLOORS US (v4-17)

As well as Daniel sharing things with God, God shares things with Daniel.

- v4-6
- He's by the river. Like in other visions they are near the canal, or by the sea. Perhaps the chaos and danger of water a reminder of what is at stake.
- Yet here is a man. Not a beast, or a statue. An incredibly majestic human.
- It's a staggering image,
 - of incredible riches (Gold, bronze),
 - holiness (face like lightning, eyes like torches)
 - and power (voice like a multitude). We'll hear what that voice says shortly
- Who is it?
 - Well there are different theories. An angel, a messenger from God.
 - But when we compare it with the vision that John has in the book of Revelation 1 (as the Trogs are doing- looking forward to seeing the pictures!), there's a good case to be made that this is Jesus Christ appearing in advance in the Old Testament to Daniel.
 - That presents its own difficulties in verse 13 because this figure seems to be held up, but that might be a divine way of communicating how fierce the spiritual battle is, even though its outcome is not in doubt.
- ▲ I once had a strange experience, I was swimming underwater in an outdoor swimming pool, and as a result couldn't hear with normal volume what was going on outside the pool. A fighter jet flew overhead the moment that I rose up out of the water, so that without warning I went from the underwater calm to 150Decibels of white noise. For about half a second I was totally disorientated and didn't know what was going on.
- In Revelation this sound of a multitude is put alongside the roar of rushing waters and loud peals of thunder.
- It's a sensory overload. Daniel's mates don't even see the vision and yet they dive for cover v7.
- IN the next few verses Daniel describes himself as
 - deathly pale and helpless v8
 - trembling v11
 - speechless v15
 - very weak v16

- hardly able to breathe v17.
- Now I know that Daniel is in his 80s right now, so could be a little frail, but I think that's beside the point, these are psychosomatic episodes related to the intense emotional that comes from an encounter with God.
- I'm not saying it's always this way, some of us are very stiff upper lip. One friend of mine came to faith on his bike at a set of traffic lights in Cambridge when he realised he was, and his conversion was no less real. But for others, and for Daniel, there's an intense emotional encounter.
- And that is certainly often the case in the Bible.
 - Isaiah is overcome with guilt- woe to me for I am ruined
 - Ezekiel is flat on his face.
 - Peter is on the floor of the fishing boat
- What does the messenger from heaven, possibly Jesus focus on.
- Well come back next week to find out more, but he speaks in v13 of this intense spiritual battle- spiritual forces resisting the advance of God's kingdom, and similar in verse 20. The coming superpowers of Persia and Greece. Behind the rise and fall of nations which has been such a big part of this book, there's a spiritual dimension.
- And some of these are going to speak of superpowers who by demonic force and going to try and destroy the people of God and their worship of the True God.
- The NT says *"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."*
 - Satan wants to dis
 - But he's on a lead.
 - Wonderful scene in Pilgrims Progress (watch animation for free) when his path to the
- So the Revelation that Floors us.
- I hope that encountering God in his Word as he speaks by his Spirit to us through his Word the Bible, we are ready for this kind of emotional experience. "Did not our hearts burn within us when he opened the Scriptures on the road".
- One time someone came into my hero, Vicar Charles Simeon's flat in 1794 to find him so overwhelmed with the Lord Jesus and his kind mercy to him, that he couldn't utter a word until finally he just said "Glory, Glory"¹

¹ <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/brothers-we-must-not-mind-a-little-suffering>

- Has the Spirit ever brought you such conviction of sin that you were deeply affected?
- Have you ever found yourself overcome with emotion at the wonder of God's grace towards you so that you are brought to tears
- For me it's rare, and we mustn't crave an experience for experiences' sake, or worse a manufactured frothy emotion, we are craving a deep interaction with the the Lord through his gospel, but when those tears come they are precious.
- The Revelation that floors us.

(the prayer that grounds us, the revelation that floors us, can we expect to remain on the floor overwhelmed?) Let's move to the final heading...

3) THE LOVE THAT LIFTS US (v18-21,11)

V18-19

- It's actually the third touch,
- and the second "do not be afraid".
- And it's the second "you who are highly esteemed".
 - I love that.
 - The ESV translates it "O man greatly loved".
 - Greatly loved.
 - Daniel finds himself having an interview with a divine soldier who has just stepped off the front line to give him a progress report, and he's overwhelmed, but that soldier (and I'm convinced it's Jesus) reassures him.
 - O man greatly loved. Highly Esteemed.
- How do you think of Daniel?
 - A great hero of faith?
 - Yes the book of Daniel is referenced in the Hebrews 11 hall of fame. *"And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who **shut the mouths of lions**, 34 quenched **the fury of the flames**.*
 - But these guys are on the roll call of faith not so much because they are amazing, but because their God is amazing.

- In fact, Daniel is like you and me. In chapter 9 he has confessed his part in the sin of the people, a sin so bad that it drove them out of the promised land.
- Daniel is normal.
- He's like you and me. He's a sinner.
- And here we see that he is very weak.
- But wonderfully he discovers that for all his sin (ch9), for all his weakness (ch10) he is highly esteemed.
- As Christianity Explored puts it "You are more wicked than you ever imagined, yet more loved than you ever dreamed".
- Yes you are weak and sinful. But you are **a woman, a man greatly loved.**
- Come to the cross of Christ where the spiritual battle reached its decisive moment, and see Satan crushed under the feet of the King of Love. See Jesus giving up his life so that your sin might be forgiven. See him rising on the 3rd day, as the universe's King of Kings.
- We are in a massive spiritual battle.
 - Satan is an enemy who wants to
 - whisper lies in your ears
 - steal your purity
 - ruin your marriage
 - stop you reading your bible
 - And when you fail he wants to rub your nose in your sin so that you despair and think that you will never be
 - He is constantly out to discourage you.
 - But in the battle, never forget these crucial words
 - "Do not be afraid, you who are highly esteemed (/greatly loved").
- Christ has died for your sins.
 - *"God demonstrates his love for us in this, while we were still sinners Christ died for us".*
 - Jesus doesn't wait for you to be acceptable before he loves you.
 - He loves you and he makes you acceptable.
 - He takes your sin on his back.
 - If you haven't ever done so, come to him, trust in him.
 - Give him your sin, and make him your Lord. Enlist yourself in his army as a loyal servant on the winning side.

- And feel that gospel touch, and hear those gospel words that say “Do not be afraid you who are highly esteemed, Peace, be strong now be strong”.
- And then Receive from him the gospel armour of salvation so that you can take your stand.

- What a battle Daniel finds himself caught up into.
 - It starts with prayer.
 - He is on his face with the revelation of God and the severity of the Battle.
 - But he is lifted up with the touch and word of grace.

- And one more thing about this battle, and we’ll see it next time with Matt
 - We are on the winning side.
 - The victory that awaits us.

Let’s pray.