

GODLY LIVING IN A GODLESS WORLD

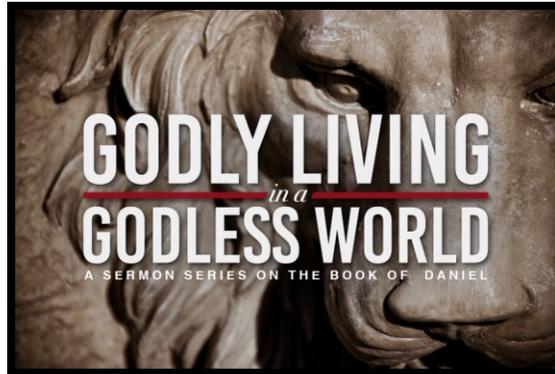
Expositional Study Of Daniel

Daniel 10:1-13a

Written By

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November 20, 2016



As the San Joaquin Sheriff Chaplain during my time as a Senior Pastor at a church plant in California, they trained me just like an officer because I might be called into action on a given ride-along. I enjoyed talking with and getting to know the officers, of being part of their promotional services, and being there in tough times. Hearing all of their funny stories added even more interest to the unique position. Sure, their job is tough and demanding, but there are those lighter moments when amusing things just unfold.

What I didn't expect, though, was what I encountered in my first shift change patrol briefing. When one shift comes off and another comes on, the watch commander assembles all the officers in a large room and gives them the lowdown on the criminal activity in the area, my area. Being raised in a law enforcement home, I had heard my share of alarming information from my father at the dinner table; however, at this point, that was years ago and I had, pretty much, put that out of my mind. That first briefing, however, brought me back to a sober reality.

The watch commander noted what various gangs had been doing during the last shift so the officers knew what to look for. He highlighted where they preyed upon unsuspecting, innocent people for their various gang initiations, where they were stealing cars and then torching them, and what to do if you happened to pull a car load of them over. He mentioned how one gang, disguised as PG & E workers, used a replica work truck to go out in the country and steal copper from various power lines. He also noted how they had found a graveyard of stolen vehicles at a certain bend in a river near town. On and on went the crime report, replete with more details than I wanted to know because many of the incidents either occurred in my

nice, quiet neighborhood, or in close proximity. I'll never forget what I told Liz and Amanda when I got home. "You two are never going out alone, even in the daylight." Their response? "Oh, you are just over-reacting. It's not as bad as it seems." Unfortunately, the city (Stockton) was that dangerous; however, it did not seem that way if you weren't privy to the inside police information.

I sense a one to one correlation here between this story and spiritual life, don't you? Paul, like a watch commander, gives believers a heavy dose of daily reality:

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Interestingly enough, the Greek for "struggle," *pale*, pronounced "pa-lay" (πάλη), is a military term denoting hand to hand combat. ¹ The copula "is" (εἶμι) is a present indicative denoting perpetual activity. The fact it is implied through ellipsis in the strong adversative clause (denoted by "but," ἀλλά) serves to draw strict attention to the spiritual nature of the believer's warfare. Further, the terms Paul employs to denote the believers enemy are etymologically tied to demonic powers, ostensibly of various ranks and positions. This lexical reality is opened up in Colossians 1:

¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him (Colossians 1).

Behind the seen world, therefore, is the unseen world of angels and demons. If this is too much for your rational, highly academic, educated mind, I direct you to the unseen world of science. All of the things in our cosmos that we cannot see with our naked eye, like atoms, molecules and so forth, are there based upon closer investigation. New York University even has a science class titled *The Seen and the Unseen in Science*, because they know the unseen is there because they have the means to discover unseen existence. I say all of this to say, since the unseen exists in the natural world, it is only logical to say the unseen exists in the spiritual world, which is far more complex.

In any event, while one unseen angelic group seeks to advance God's causes and defend His people, the other fallen angelic group seeks to undermine and oppose God and those who

¹William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), πάλη, ης, ἡ (παλαίω 'wrestle'; Hom. et al.; ins; Sb 678, 6) **engagement in a challenging contest** (orig. 'wrestling' Il. 23, 635 al., then of fights or battles Aeschyl., Ch. 866; Eur., Heracl. 159) **struggle against**, fig. ext. (Longus 3, 19, 2 of love; Philo, Sobr. 65 πρὸς πάθη π., here w. wrestling imagery), of Christians' fight against powers of darkness Eph 6:12 (the opponent is introduced by πρὸς w. the acc. as in Philo above, but the context suggests military imagery).—DELG s.v. παλαίω. M-M. TW.¹

follow Him. And, as the Watch Commander, Paul, warns us, as God's soldiers, that we are on enemy terrain, battling with the wicked world system and the demonic beings who seek to influence this system for their sinister leader, Satan. Translated, all is not what it appears to the person of faith. On one level there is the life we live with all of its ups and downs, trials and triumphs, and on another level there is gang activity of another sort focused on deceiving the world so they mindlessly follow the Dragon, and so we become weakened by disillusionment, discouragement, despair, and departure from following hard after the Christ.

Daniel knew exactly what I am talking about. Burdened for God's people, Israel, and whether they would make it now that they had returned to the Promised Land after a seventy year captivity, coupled with knowing from prior visions from God about the rise and fall of world empires (Daniel 2, 7, 8), not to mention the coming of the Messiah and His death, followed by future world-wide trouble for Israel (Daniel 9:24-27), it was almost too much for the aged saint to process. And, then, God gave him one final high definition vision in Daniel 11 and 12 concerning tough times for Israel before God would *finally* fulfill His total kingdom plan.

Overcome with all of this spiritual insight, Daniel prayed for twenty-one straight days for God to give him further insight to help him understand, in a fuller fashion, God's plan for Israel and ultimately the world so he could be comforted. For twenty-one straight days nothing happened. No word. No message. Zip. Nada. Nothing. He records his intense and emotionally draining spiritual experience in Daniel 10, and from these twenty-one verses emerges a spiritual motif all believers should be aware of:

Spiritual Delay Could Be Because Of The Spiritual Fray (Daniel 10:1-13a)

Ever wonder why you face so much opposition as a Christian? If you're a pastor, ever wondered why those arrayed against you and your biblical preaching/teaching seem to never let up no matter how hard you pray and lead? Ever contemplated how the complex, thorny issue you are up against seems like it is made of hardened concrete poured over massive iron beams? Ever wondered how, to quote Swindoll, you do seem to take three steps forward and then two steps back? Ever feel like you are in a spiritual holding pattern waiting for something great to happen all while embracing the reality that circumstances will not permit you to land and find relief? You, my friend, are engaged in combat with the forces of darkness arrayed against you, and based on their rank and power, coupled with what is going on as they engage God's angels, spiritual headway might be slow in coming.

What should you do if this is your life situation? Learn from Daniel who fought effectively on this battlefield long before you. Over the next two studies we will learn from him how to function in a time of delay. Structurally, six concepts emerge from God's field manual which can assist you as you struggle with forces of darkness embedded in this world. We shall cover three of these concepts in this study.

The Power In The Fray (Daniel 10:1-3)

Where does the saint's power come from in times of delay? It comes from prayer, pure and simple. Read on and you will see what I mean:

¹ In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar; and the message was true and *one of* great conflict, but he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision. ² In those days, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks. ³ I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all until the entire three weeks were completed.

The year was 536 B.C. Cyrus issued the exciting decree for the Jews to head home around 537 B.C. (2 Chronicles 36:22; Ezra 1:1), but only 49,697 of them dared to take the arduous, dangerous journey (Ezra 2:64-65) under the fine leadership of Zerubbabel (Ezra 3). The main goal involved rebuilding the Temple; however, things did not go well because of constant opposition from indigenous Gentile people (Ezra 4:1-5, 24). Yes, Daniel understood from the angelic prophetic lesson in Daniel 9 that times would be tough for his people, Israel, as God worked out His messianic/kingdom plan; yet, I'm sure he just wanted the joy of their release to, at least, be followed by a period of excitement for being back in the Promised Land. It did not happen. Every step of the way they met with stiff opposition and outright hostility. Don't you know the eight-five-year-old prophet wondered, "Lord, what is going on?"

Overcome with the sad situation, Daniel resorted to do what all godly people should do in times of delay: he prayed, fasted (by abstaining from certain luxurious foods and fine vintages available to him), and he did not even rub costly oils on his brittle, thin, and sun-spotted skin. In every respect he showed God he had humbled himself as he approached God's throne. When's the last time your Gordian knot of life situation, one with demonic fingerprints all over it, moved you to pray with this kind of commitment?

When's the last time what is going on in your country or family so arrested your spiritual attention you prayed and fasted for TWENTY-ONE DAYS? Perhaps a spiritual breakthrough eludes you because you have spent a few minutes here and there in prayer, when you should be committed to talking with the living Lord at a whole new level. Mark Daniel's model well: At the real thorny times of his life, he ramped up his prayer life, knowing he needed God more than ever before and knowing that God would, in fact, eventually answer. Talking to saints about the issue you are up against is one thing. Sending out *Tweets*, writing out *Insta-grams*, and spelling out what you are up against on *Facebook* is one thing. *Talking to God about it over a prolonged period of time is another matter altogether.* Perhaps you need to reverse your methodology in this significant area of spirituality. Daniel approached God's throne in a big fashion. Do you? Will you? If you are in a period of a delay, prayer is your greatest source of power for the battle is spiritual.

For the younger ones among us, think of video games for a moment. I've played enough of them to know they typically pit you against a wide array of powerful opponents. How do you win? How do you get results? You push forward while collecting all the right weapons or power sources. If you do not do this, you will not be playing for very long, nor will you know

victory. Such is the nature of prayer to you a spiritual warrior. It empowers you to push through sinister spiritual forces and realize a point of breakthrough. Verse 4 teaches us this much.

The Personage In The Fray (Daniel 10:4-10)

Back in chapter nine, which was two years prior to the events in chapter 10, Daniel devoted himself to confessional prayer as he sought God's insight into the possible release of Israel from captivity in his lifetime. God eventually gave the prophet a prophetic word to end all prophetic words, and it came from the mouth of the angel Gabriel. Now, two years later, Daniel was up against another wall regarding Israel, and, as before, he poured out his soul to God. Amazingly, on day twenty-four, God answered via angelic messenger, again.

⁴ On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris,

Hold it right there. Let's make some salient observations.

One, even though he was a political official in high office he still took quality time to pray. Don't use your office and your busyness to rationalize away your need to pray. If anyone should pray, it should be you, especially if you are a leader of sorts. May God give us more leaders who fear Him and fall before Him.

Two, Daniel had a special place to connect with God, the Tigris River. Why did he not stay near the Euphrates which was near Babylon? Who knows. Perhaps there were too many people who would know him there, leaving him open to countless political conversations. Perhaps he had a special spot near the Tigris, which just north of Babylon was only some thirty-five miles away. Just far enough from the busyness of Babylon to get alone with God. Why did he go specifically to the Tigris? The only other time this river appears in Scripture is in Genesis 2:14 where it is named as one of the four rivers flowing from the underground aquifer located near the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:11-14). Ah, this is most interesting. The locale or place where mankind fell into sin is where Daniel goes to pray. What better place to go for silence and solitude? Theologically, it was the perfect place insofar as based on the Messianic prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 God would eventually deal with sin through the Messiah/Savior (Romans 5:12-21). Let's pursue this a little further. Why a river? Daniel's entire prophetic career within a godless nation revolved around the rise and fall of all the world empires, climaxing with the coming of the Messiah. Would not a river dovetail nicely with the content of his ministry? The constant, powerful flow of water merely reflected how God has spoken to him. Further, a mighty river, crashing over rocks, and then slowing down into quiet pools, only to be catapulted again over its banks served as the perfect metaphor of the conflict of the nations leading to the coming of the Christ. All of this is probably why he was at a river at this tough time in his life. Where is your Tigris?

Three, Daniel received a flash of new prophetic insight into his frustrating delay on the twenty-fourth day. "So what?" you say. This is a big deal. This was the twenty-fourth day of the first month. The first month in the Jewish calendar is Nisan, or March/April (Exodus 23:15).

Passover, interestingly enough, was on the fourteen day of Nisan, followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread from the fifteenth to the twenty-first (Exodus 12). Is this fact not exciting? Sometime just after the observance of both of these feasts, which the Messiah would theologially fulfill (viz., He became the Passover Lamb, as prophesied, on Passover, and he was unleavened, in the sense that he had no sin), Daniel received another angelic answer to his intense prayers laid out before God. Amazing. Believe me, this is all no coincidence.

What happened on the March 24, 536 B.C.? I'll let Daniel tell you:

⁵ I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a *belt of* pure gold of Uphaz. ⁶ His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult.

The description informs you that this, again, is no ordinary man, although he does have manish characteristics. God sent another angel, which one we do not know, and his appearance is so magnificent, Daniel resorts to multiple similes in an attempt to describe him. The fine linen reminds us of the clothing of priests of God (Exodus 28:39-43), and it is what angels wear on other occasions (Ezekiel 9:2-3,11; 10:2, 6-7). The belt around his waist was pure gold, and, again, gold had adorned the Temple per God's instructions so it is only logical to see it associated with a holy angel from God's presence. The angel's body was like the jewel *beryl*, which is from the Hebrew *tarshish*, which is translated *chrysolite* in the Greek Septuagint. The thought here is of a colorful, glowing body like none you have ever seen before. And his face? It pulsed with light like that of a bolt of lightning. His eyes? Who could forget them? They would put any X-Men (Cyclops) to shame with their flaming, burning nature. He exposed arms and feet shone like polished bronze, making any military man proud. And his voice? Like the sound of thousands of voices. Powerful. Memorable. Frightening, to be honest.

When this angel materialized like a person sent through a *Star Trek* energizer, what happened with Daniel and his entourage? Keep reading:

⁷ Now I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, while the men who were with me did not see the vision; nevertheless, a great dread fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves. ⁸ So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength. ⁹ But I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

When fear washed over Daniel's aging body, the men with him saw the change and knew something ominous was happening so they took off. Wouldn't you? Daniel just stood there like a dead stone statue. He had prayed for divine help, but he had never expected this! What follows is a high definition look at what goes on behind the scenes when you and I are lost in passionate, focused prayer.

¹⁰ Then behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.

The unnamed angel didn't vaporize Daniel. He didn't move in a threatening manner so as to scare him. On the contrary, he placed his hand on the flattened, stiffened prophet and helped him to his knees so they could have an enlightening conversation about the prophet's prayer request.

Have some hope, you who are flattened and stiffened, not by the fear created by an angelic messenger, but by the fear of your current complex life circumstance. Have hope because through this short episode in Daniel's life we learn that God loves us, cares about us, and is at work in the pernicious, problematic pause despite what your eyes are telling you. You might need to re-read that one more time. And who knows, an angel just might be coming your way to give you a word through the Word of God, a word which answer your questions, give you some much needed insight, and a ray of hope for the uncertain future.

What is most interesting about Daniel's angelic encounter is what the angel tells him. I call this . . .

The Problem In The Fray (Daniel 10:11-13a)

What language do angels speak? It's not gibberish. It's Hebrew, as we see here, but I'm sure they are not limited to one language given the fact they are higher in the created order than we are. What do angels say when they show up? They complement God's seasoned soldiers. They are sent specifically by God for special assignments directly related to our prayers. They bring comfort to us because fear so easily causes us to freeze up. You'll see all this in the angel's words to the wobbly, woozy prophet:

¹¹ He said to me, "O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. ¹² Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding *this* and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. ¹³ "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; . . .

We will stop right there and pick up the rest of the verse in our next study. For now, zero in on the insight the angel gives Daniel regarding why his prayer went unanswered for twenty-one straight days.

First, note the angel states that Daniel's initial prayer registered in heaven, resulting in God dispatching the angel in question. Applied to us, the point is similar, I'm sure. Your prayers don't fall on the glassy floor of heaven, but go right to the Lord. He hears, evaluates, and analyzes them, and then gives an order to an angel to assist with the realization of the prayer as it relates to His perfect will, of course. Stop feeling like God isn't listening to you. He hears immediately.

Second, the mighty, glorious being informs Daniel that his prayer for insight was delayed because “the prince of the kingdom of Persia” withstood him. Obviously, no natural man could hold back an angel from fulfilling their divinely appointed mission, so this prince has to be demonic in origin. And this prince had to be of a higher rank than the angel sent from God, for he was able to hold him at bay (how this occurs is not disclosed in Scripture). Further, this particular prince was in charge of the principality/territory of Persia. His goal from Satan was/is (Don’t think he has gone anywhere. I think he working overtime on Iran) to thwart the kingdom/messianic kingdom work of God as God worked in and through the country of Persia. He had certainly done his job well for at least twenty-one days.

From this we can probably safely extrapolate and say there are, in fact, powerful demonic beings assigned to deceive the nations. Hitler’s penchant for tapping into the occult gives us a glimpse into the power of these beings over the lives of politicians, military officers, and all others in positions of influence. I’m sure they are at work in our own country, seeking to undermine the work of God in and through the Church, to change our definition of what constitutes high morals, to create chaos by pitting us against each other, to perpetuate false worldviews, and so forth.

Again, the rational, educated mind would smugly smile and say, “Are you kidding me? You believe this stuff?” Yes. A Jewish friend of mine years ago happened to be the D.A. in town. I asked this unbeliever, who investigated all the big crimes, if he at least believed in a divine being. Without hesitation he said, “Yes, I do.” When I pressed him further, this highly educated man, who is now a judge, said, “From my crime investigations I can see there is a force at work here beyond that which is human, an evil force.” He called this force demonic, and from it he, the highly educated attorney, embraced the notion of God’s existence. Years later he trusted Jesus as his Messiah. Wonderful story.

We will dig deeper into this facet of spiritual warfare in our next study, but suffice it today for this study for you to at least wrap your mind around this one concept:

*Your Spiritual Delay Could Be Because Of The Spiritual Fray
(Daniel 10:1-13a)*

There is more going on than you might be aware of. How should you respond? With prayer. As Paul commands us at the close of his spiritual warfare passage in Ephesians 6:

¹⁸ With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints . . . (Ephesians 6).

Now is not the time to pull back, to get discouraged, to think God is not listening to you, to think that God does not care about you, or to pull back in your faith. No. Now is the time to push forward in prayer because there is just no telling how your prayers are working themselves out in the angelic realm.