

Get ready to rise and shine!

Text: Daniel 12:1-3 for 11/18/2018 by Pastor Bolwerk

“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. ² Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”

If you were going into battle against an enemy what are some things you would do to prepare for that battle? You might start out by locating your enemy, making sure you know where your enemy is. Then you might try to figure out your enemy’s strengths and weaknesses. You are probably also going to want to know your enemy’s tactics: How does your enemy attack and fight?

So, as you are preparing to fight your enemy would you have a victory celebration? Probably not since you haven’t defeated your enemy yet; you still have to fight them. In these verses from the book of Daniel, God speaks to Daniel preparing him for a time of distress that is coming. God strengthens Daniel for a battle that he is facing, and as he does our Lord is also encouraging Daniel, and us, with an amazing message about that battle. God is telling us to ...

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- I. The victory is already ours,
- II. But the battle is not over.

In Daniel’s day there was no victory to celebrate. Israel had been defeated, conquered by the army of Babylon. The few people who had not been killed in battle were carried off into exile. The people from Judah were made slaves and servants to the Babylonian royalty. Daniel understood exactly why this had happened. It was because Israel had acted wickedly, turning away from the true God and worshipping false gods. This rebellion had brought God’s wrath and punishment on all the people.

So Daniel prays to God, confessing his sin and the sins of the people. He says, **“All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you”** (Daniel 9:11). Daniel doesn’t exclude himself from these sins. He clearly says, “we have sinned.” Daniel recognizes the sin in himself and realizes he was also part of the reason God’s judgments had been carried out on Israel.

Daniel recognized there was no hope in Israel saving itself from its current situation. He realized there was no hope for him to save himself. Daniel could not fight the temptations of Satan and the world on his own. He knew how prone his own heart was to sin against God, and that sin brought God’s wrath. He knew he needed God’s help. So Daniel put his faith in God’s promises, and he put his trust in God’s mercy.

God responded to Daniel’s faith-filled prayer by sending an angel to tell him of how God was working to protect and save his people. **“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered”** (v. 1). God tells

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Daniel that he is protecting him and the believers of Israel. To do that God sent Michael, an archangel and commander of God's spiritual forces. Michael leads his fellow angels in the spiritual battle against Satan and all those who take the devil's side. The Lord also tells Daniel that Michael is protecting the believers, so when the time of great distress comes all those who trust in God will be delivered. God is letting Daniel know: You are being protected, and one day you will be delivered.

We also need that protection and deliverance. On our own we could never stand up against Satan and his evil forces. The devil and his allies are battling us every day. They try to get us to question God and his goodness. They try to get us to doubt God and his promises. We battle this world with its temptations, problems, and suffering that it throws at us day after day. All this spiritual fighting takes its toll on us and wears us down.

When you got up this morning what battles were you facing? Loneliness or depression? Are you battling some addiction? Do you find yourself fighting back fear or anger? Maybe you struggle with this unbelieving world as it tempts you to join it in its greed, lust, and envy. The devil and his followers never stop fighting against us, and they don't fight fair. Their constant attacks against our faith can leave us feeling like we will never win this battle. Their relentless assaults can make us feel like giving up. Or worse, we may not even try fighting their temptations any more thinking it's a fight we can win anyway.

But as soon as we think those things that's when Satan has won. That is exactly what he wants you to think. Giving up is exactly what he wants you to do. He wants you to think things are hopeless and that there is no use trying. Yet every one of those thoughts is sinful because it means we are ignoring God and all that he has told us about himself. We are forgetting God's power and his promises to continually care for us, provide for us, and protect us, both body and soul.

God knows the devil and all his tricks which is why God keeps fighting for us. And that fight started already back in the Garden of Eden. When Satan deceived Adam and Eve it brought sin and death into the world. That is when God went on the attack. God promised to send someone to come and crush the head of Satan. Then all throughout history God fought for his people putting everything in place to bring the Savior into the world. **"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law"** (Galatians 4:4-5). Jesus came into the world to battle Satan in our place. Christ was able to beat the devil's every temptation. Then Jesus went to the cross to wage the greatest battle ever, sacrificing himself to defeat Satan once and for all by paying for the sins of the entire world. Jesus shed his blood to pay for our sinful desire to give up the fight, and for our foolish forgetfulness of God's power and promises. Christ died to defeat death and destroy the devil's power.

Jesus' death won the war, and his resurrection sealed for us the victory. As Daniel was told by the angel, **"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt"** (v. 2). Daniel certainly knew his life was not going to go on forever in this world. We know that too. One day we will all "sleep in the dust of the earth." But that doesn't mean we have lost. As God pointed out, one day we will awaken from that sleep, and then it will be time to rise and shine! As those who trust in Christ and his forgiveness, we will awake to everlasting life! Covered with Jesus' perfect robe of righteousness we will be welcomed into the presence of our holy, heavenly Father. Through faith in Christ we understand that no matter how bad things may seem in this

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world in the end we have the victory. So, get ready to rise and shine, because in Christ the victory is already ours.

In Jesus we truly have won, but that doesn't mean that our work here in this world is done. As long as we are alive in this world God has work for us, his believers, to do. Which is why he encourages us to get ready to rise and shine. The victory is already our, but the battle is not over. Not yet.

The devil is still fighting against us. He knows he ultimately cannot win, but that doesn't stop him from trying to take out believers as he retreats. We know that we have the protection of God's guardian angels, yet we still need to be ready with the Word of God to defend ourselves. We need to be ready to rise up and shine the light of God's word onto every one of the devil's lies, revealing them for what they are. We need to fill ourselves with our Lord's words to give us the strength to fight Satan's temptations.

Along with using God's word to protect ourselves we want to rise and shine that word into the world. We do that to help those who are still trapped by Satan. Remember what the angel said to Daniel: **"Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever"** (v. 2). Those who are wise will shine. True wisdom only comes from God's saving word. We can shine the light of that word into the lives of those who are trapped in the darkness of their sins.

Think of all the people in your life who have been beat up time and again by Satan and his followers. We've seen the damage the devil does: lives damaged by the stress of chasing the almighty dollar, families broken by selfish attitudes and a lack of love, people who think "stuff" will make them happy, but all their possessions only leave them poor and sad. You and I have the opportunity to lead those people to righteousness, Christ's righteousness. We can shine on those people the light of God's life saving gospel. We can lead those people out of the darkness of sin and guilt, and into the wonderful light of Jesus' forgiveness. When we do, when God creates faith in their hearts those people will can begin to enjoy the peace of God's forgiveness and the comfort of his protection. But what is even better is that those people will no longer have to look forward to an eternity of shame and contempt. Instead, like us, they can look forward to an everlasting life.

The battle is not over. We need to keep fighting for our faith. We need to keep fighting to bring others to faith. My brothers and sister keep fighting. Not as those who fight in vain, or as those who have no hope. Keep fighting because you know the victory is already yours. Jesus has won! He has conquered our enemies and now he fights to keep us safe. He fights for us until that glorious day when we will rise and shine in his presence forever. Amen.