



Stand in Your Love

Daniel 10:1-21

Speaker: Annie Duncan

Disclaimer: This transcript was computer generated and may contain errors.

Well, good morning, BelPres. Good morning. It is wonderful to be here with you this morning. My name is Annie Duncan. I'm the executive pastor at BelPres. And yeah, always love being in worship with you all.

This summer, if you don't know, we have been walking through the Book of Daniel, and I'm preaching the second to last sermon in this series. In two weeks from now, don't come next week, because we'll be at Worship in the Park at Bellevue Park. But in two weeks, Anthony Ballard is gonna wrap up the entire Book of Daniel. It's gonna be a banger. You gotta come and hear that sermon.

But before we get to that final sermon, we got chapter 10. And before we unpack chapter 10, maybe you've been following on with us, maybe you haven't, but let's see, you know, let's do a quick recap of chapters one through nine so that we can walk through chapter 10 together.

Chapter one of Daniel, Daniel finds himself in captivity, and he and his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they are about teenagers at this point in chapter one. And as a teenager, Daniel interprets some dreams, and then later on in his life, he has some dreams himself. And then fast forward to Daniel in chapter six, he's thrown in to the lion's den, and he's about 80 years old at that point.

And then in chapter nine, and the sermon that Pastor Becky preached last week, Daniel prayed a very honest prayer to God. He's repenting on behalf of his people, and knowing that they had sinned against God, and he's asking God, God, would you bring this time of exile and oppression to an end? But then at the end of chapter nine, right before we get to chapter 10, at the end of chapter nine, Daniel gets word from the angel Gabriel that his prayer is not going to be answered, because God's people are still sinning.

And so the time of oppression wouldn't conclude after 70 years, but would actually be seven times longer than Jeremiah originally prophesied it would be. And so we arrive in chapter 10 with all that in mind. Things were supposed to be getting better, but they just took a major turn or are about to get worse. So picture this Daniel. He spent 70 years in captivity, the majority of his life. He's now in his mid-90s and he has seen a lot. He's seen kings rise and fall, and yet throughout his time in captivity, he has remained faithful to God. But he's tired and he's discouraged.

Maybe some of you can resonate with being tired and discouraged. So let's walk through this chapter and we're going to take it chunk by chunk.

So Daniel 10, one through nine: In the third year of Cyrus, King of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel who is called Belteshazzar. Its message was true and it concerned a great war. The understanding of the message came to him in a vision. At that time, I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food, no meat or wine touched my lips, and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.

On the 24th day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen with a belt of fine gold from Ufaz around his waist. His body was like topaz, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude. I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision. Those who were with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves.

So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision. I had no strength left. My face turned deathly pale, and I was helpless. Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground.

So scripture tells us that 90-year-old Daniel has been fasting for three weeks because he was in mourning. Though scripture doesn't exactly tell us what he was in mourning for, we can gander a guess that it had something to do with the state of his people being in continued exile and oppression. And so he's in this state, mourning and fasted. He is physically and emotionally exhausted.

And in verse four of chapter 10, it describes the angelic messenger, a man dressed in linen, whose sight frightens Daniel to the point of trembling terror. Faithful Daniel, who could interpret dreams and had been thrown in to a den of lions and lived to tell the tale, he is scared to the point of death. Scripture says and describes it as deathly pale.

Now, contrast that Daniel to me reading through chapter 10 as I was prepping for this sermon. I did so in the comfort of my own home, on a cozy couch with a good cup of coffee, in hand and a doggo at my side. But let's put ourselves back in Daniel's shoes for a moment. We seldom think about the fearful reverence that some of God's servants like Daniel had to endure. What it cost them to hear the word of God. Daniel was scared to death.

A commentator tells the story about a man who kept on going on and on about how God spoke to him. Oh yeah, God speaks to me when I'm brushing my teeth in the morning, when I'm commuting to work, when I'm checking my email. I'm constantly hearing God speak to me. To which the commentator replied, did you stop brushing your teeth? Did you pull your car over? Did you stop checking your email? In other words, did you just continue about your day or did you stop in your tracks and fully listen to the God of the universe that's speaking to you?

What a contrast to what we just read in Daniel, right? It's a wonderful thing that we have access to the Holy Spirit and can hear God's voice so readily and easily. And yet, let's never take that for granted because Daniel had a very different experience.

Nothing prepared Daniel for this man dressed in linen. Let's read it again. His body was like Topaz. He's like this giant avatar, right? His face like lightning. His eyes like flaming torches. His arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze. And his voice like the sound of a multitude. Nothing prepared Daniel for what some commentaries refer to as this angelic warrior, whose sight would have scared any one of us.

So how do you respond to something you've never encountered before? And how do you respond to things that you didn't even know existed?

I can't speak for Daniel, but my guess is at this point in his life and at this point in the book of Daniel, this is the most discouraged and afraid that Daniel has ever been in his whole life. He's afraid of the man in linen that's before him. He is utterly discouraged at the news that he just heard about his people and the future.

But what happens in the midst of this fear and discouragement is critical for how we understand how God comforts his people. So let's keep reading.

Verses 10 through 12: A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. He said, Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I'm about to speak to you. And stand up, for I have now been sent to you. And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling. Then he continued, do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.

So the first thing the man in Linen does with Daniel is he helps Daniel get back on his feet. And this is one of the ways that God comforts us, right? With this first touch, he gets Daniel back on his feet. If you remember back in verse 9, it says that Daniel was so overwhelmed with terror at the sight of the man dressed in linen that he fell to the ground with his face to the ground. But the man in linen touches Daniel, and this first touch enables him to stand.

And the man does this gently. If you can imagine Daniel completely prostrate on the ground, face to the ground, the man in linen touches Daniel and first gets him, though Daniel is trembling, to his hands and his knees. So he's halfway there. He's halfway to

standing. Then the man in linen says, Daniel, you are highly esteemed. We don't use that kind of language, and so other translations put it this way: Daniel, you are loved. Daniel, I love you.

And it's out of that assurance of love that the man in linen commands Daniel to stand. And the assurance of God's love during a time of terror and distress is meant to remind us that we can withstand anything. We can gather ourselves and stand in the midst of whatever we face because we are not alone and because we are loved.

Have you ever faced something terrible, only to be assured of God's love for you in the middle of it? God doesn't promise us a trouble-free life. In fact, Jesus promises us that we will face trouble in this world. So along with telling Daniel that he is loved, the man in linen says, Daniel, I've come because you've humbled yourself. I've heard the things that you've been praying night and day. I've heard you praying for your people.

So in this section, the man in linen, he does three things. He touches Daniel and he gets Daniel back on his feet. He assures Daniel that he is loved. And then he goes on to say, Daniel, I hear you. I hear the prayers that you've been praying. The man in linen gives us a glimpse of God the Father and his heart for us, which causes Daniel to fall back on the ground again, which we're gonna see in verse 15. So let's keep reading.

While he was saying this to me, I bowed with my face toward the ground and was speechless. The one who looked like a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and began to speak. And I said to the one standing before me, I'm overcome with anguish because of the vision, my Lord, and I feel very weak. How can I, your servant, talk with you, my Lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe.

So Daniel's back on the ground again with his face towards the ground and his mouth is closed. He is in utter awe of the man in linen. And then the man touches Daniel a second time. The one who looked like a man touched my lips and I opened my mouth and began to speak. Somehow this second touch enables Daniel's speechlessness to come to a halt because the moment the man in linen touches Daniel's lips, Daniel is talking.

And the first thing that he says is he confesses his weakness. He confesses that he's overcome and he says, I don't even know how I can talk to you. I can barely breathe. In the presence of this angelic man in linen, Daniel just lays it all out there, which again echoes what Pastor Becky preached last week. How when we talk to God, we can just lay it all out there because God knows our hearts anyway, right?

We can confess to God when we, like Daniel, feel helpless and afraid. When I look back at all the prayers that I write down in my prayer journal, they have this theme of help. Help God, help, I can't do it. Help my family, help my church, help those in my community. There is so much healing power when we bring to Jesus what's on our hearts with zero fear of rejection.

And again, in my prayer journal, there's this worship song that I write over and over again often. And one of the bridges goes like this: there's no place I can go, your love won't find me. No place I can hide that you don't see. No place I could fall, your love couldn't catch me. You see it all, you see it all through the eyes of love.

And that's how this man in linen is seeing Daniel right now, through the eyes of love. He's not bummed out by Daniel's raw display of weakness. He's not there to break Daniel down, but to build Daniel back up. And when we too go to God in our moments of weakness, God isn't there to break us down, but to build us back up.

Which brings us to this third and final touch that we see in the remaining few verses of Daniel 10, verses 18 and 19: Again, the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. Do not be afraid, you who are 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.

In the verses that we just read before this section, Daniel gave the man in linen every reason why he should just turn away from Daniel because Daniel's overwhelmed, he's weak, he doesn't have any strength. But the man in linen doesn't abandon Daniel. Instead, the man in linen touches Daniel a third and final time. Again, the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. And this third and final touch not only gives Daniel strength, but it also gives him peace.

Just a few verses before this, Daniel says, I cannot go on. But after this third touch, Daniel is strengthened to the point where he says, speak my Lord, since you have given me strength. Now, we don't know how long this vision went on, but the man in linen has been hanging out with Daniel long enough to touch him three times. First, to get him back on his feet. Second, to invite him to speak.

And third, to give him the strength that he is going to need to bear the message that the man in linen has come to bring to Daniel. So what does the man in linen have to say to Daniel? You'll have to come back in two weeks to find out. Or just keep reading in your Bible, Chapter 11 and 12, you'll find out.

But we've reached the end of Chapter 10 and the end of our scripture passage for today. And maybe I should have led with this, but Chapter 10 doesn't reveal anything of what the man in linen has come to communicate to Daniel. It's all about the preparation before the communication. Chapter 10 is about how God comforts his people.

And in Daniel's case, comforts and prepares Daniel for the very hard message that the man in linen is about to give him. Which is why Chapter 10 is so important. Because a lot of us are living very real and tangible Chapter 10s in our lives. We're in the midst of hardship. We've heard hard news. We look to the future and all we might see is uncertainty.

But not only does God have something to say about that as he does for Daniel, but he has something for us to do about that. Daniel was a faithful prayer, and he prayed daily for his people. And BelPres, we the church, can do the same.

In scripture, it says, are there sick among you? Bring them forward. The church will pray. Are there people that are hurting? Come alongside them. Assure them that they are not alone.

Our brothers and sisters of New Hope this weekend are commemorating the Banja Malenga Massacre that happened many years ago, but which so many of our brothers and sisters still remember the trauma of those that they lost. And they join Congolese globally that are commemorating that massacre this weekend. So what can we do? We can pray for our brothers and sisters. We can listen to their stories. We can weep with those that weep.

Daniel 10 is a reminder that life is really, really hard. And it's a reminder that in the middle of the really, really hard, God is with us and we're not alone. And like Daniel, there might be things that we're going through in our lives that we just don't have categories for because we didn't think in this lifetime we'd ever experience them. We didn't know that they even existed.

The number of people that I know in this church that are being impacted by the collapse of jobs in the tech industry leave so many with questions and fear and anxiety. People who thought they had job security after 25 years working at a company facing job loss and an uncertain job market is something that just wasn't on their radar. And there are so many uncertainties that we face, right?

A health diagnosis, relationship breakdown, bills that maybe pile on top of another and you have no idea how you're going to cover it all. So what is our response to the uncertainties of today? It is to be the church and to do as Jesus would have us to do. We can pray for those that are facing uncertainty. We can come alongside them and let them know that they are not alone.

This is why even though Chapter 10 is this intro chapter to what's to come, we can learn a lot from Daniel here. We can stand up to the lies of fear that can sometimes be so tempting to believe and we can say, more than I fear uncertainty, God, I will stand in your love for me. More than I fear seeming weak, I will confess to others what's on my heart and the things that I carry. And more than I fear asking for help, I will ask someone to pray with me.

Just like the man in Lennon appeared to Daniel, not to break him down, but to build him up, that is the work of the church, to come alongside, to build each other up. And so the practice for this week is twofold.

First, to be like Daniel, to cry out to God in prayer on behalf of ourselves and our people. And second, to be like the man in Lennon, to be a ministry of presence to those that are

suffering, to help them get back on their feet, to assure them that they are loved, and to give them the strength and hope that they have in Christ.

So come back in two weeks and hear Anthony wrap up the Book of Daniel. But for now, pray with me.

Jesus, we thank you for your call to be the church. To be your church, Jesus. And we thank you that we can't do that without your help. So Holy Spirit, fill us to be your hands and feet. Give us eyes to see those around us as you see them, Jesus.

And especially this weekend, God, we pray for our brothers and sisters of New Hope. We read in Scripture, God, that you are near to the broken hearted. So we ask that you are tangibly present to them. Bring your comfort and peace to those that are mourning. And help us be the church and come alongside them, assuring them that they are not alone in their grief.

And for those in our community, God, that are facing uncertainty, we ask that same thing, that you are near to the broken hearted. Assure them that you are in the middle of all that they are going through. And God, even right here in this moment, put people on our hearts to reach out to, to pray for.

Jesus, we thank you for what an honor it is to be your church. We love you, Jesus. Amen.

Discussion Questions:

Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.

Opening Question: Looking back to last week's sermon and scripture... How did you live differently or practice what we talked about in your life this week? What did you do and how did it go?

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

Sermon Reflection Questions: Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- In verse 12, the angel tells Daniel, *"Since the first day... your words were heard."* How does this encourage us when we feel God is slow to act?
- If Daniel 10 reveals an ongoing cosmic battle behind the scenes, how should that shape the way we pray and persevere?
- What practical steps can we take to prepare ourselves spiritually for unseen opposition?

Closing Question and Application: Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Closing group prayer: Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.