

**Think Long: Praying into the Future**

May 18, 2025

**Daniel 10:8-19**

*<sup>8</sup> So I was left alone to see this great vision all by myself. All my strength left me. My energy was sapped, and I couldn't stay strong. <sup>9</sup> Then I heard the sound of the man's words. When I heard it, I fell into a trance with my face on the ground. <sup>10</sup> But then a hand touched me, lifting me up to my hands and knees. <sup>11</sup> The man said to me, "Daniel, you are greatly treasured. Now grasp the meaning of what I'm saying to you. And stand up, because I've been sent to you." As he said this to me, I stood up, shaking.*

*<sup>12</sup> Then the man said to me, "Don't be afraid, Daniel, because from the day you first set your mind to understand things and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard. I've come because of your words! <sup>13</sup> For twenty-one days the leader of the Persian kingdom blocked my way. But then Michael, one of the highest leaders, came to help me. I left Michael there with the leader of the Persian kingdom. <sup>14</sup> But I've come to help you understand what will happen to your people in the future, because there is another vision concerning that time."*

*<sup>15</sup> While he said this to me, I turned my face to the ground and kept quiet. <sup>16</sup> But then someone who looked like a human being touched my lips. Then I opened my mouth and spoke, saying to the person standing in front of me: "My lord, the vision bothered me deeply, and I couldn't stay strong during it. <sup>17</sup> So how can I, my lord's servant, speak with you, my lord? Even now there's no strength in me, and I can barely breathe."*

*<sup>18</sup> The one who looked like a human being touched me again and gave me strength. <sup>19</sup> He said, "Don't be afraid. You are greatly treasured. All will be well with you. Be strong!" As he spoke to me, I suddenly felt strong. Then I said: "My lord can go on, because you've made me strong."*



On page 135 of *The Circle Maker* Mark Batterson writes,

“Toward the end of his life, Honi the circle maker was walking down a dirt road when he saw a man planting a carob tree.

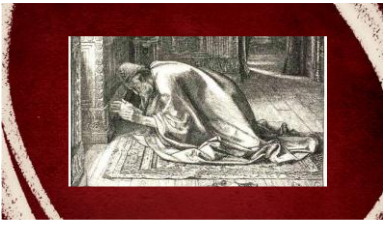
Always the inquisitive sage, Honi questioned him, ‘How long will it take this tree to bear fruit?’ The man replied, ‘Seventy years.’ Honi said, ‘Are you quite sure you will live another seventy years to eat its fruit?’ The man replied, ‘Perhaps not. However, when I was born into this world, I found carob trees planted by my father and grandfather. Just as they planted trees for me, I am planting trees for my children and grandchildren so they will be able to eat the fruit of these trees.’”

This conversation changed how Honi prayed. In a moment of revelation, the circle maker realized that praying is like planting. Each prayer is like a seed that gets planted in the ground. It eventually bears fruit that blesses future generations. This is, in essence, what it encompasses “thinking long” as it relates to praying. As we prepare to spend this time together, let us pray...

In the introductory to this week’s chapters, Batterson writes of how we live in a “now” world. We want to reap the second after we sow. We want immediate results - and that includes our prayer life. But this is not the way that prayers often work. When we lift a prayer to God, that prayer exits our reality of time and space and it enters the realm of God, where there is no time or space, at least as we understand it. This, we will see, is true in the life of Daniel. Because God is timeless and everywhere all of the time, God has the ability to show up anytime, anyplace, anyhow. Because of this, Batterson shares that the key to dreaming big and praying hard is thinking long. Like the man planting carob trees, we must think in terms of our children and grandchildren.

One benefit of thinking long is that it naturally leads us to think differently. When we are thinking and praying towards our children or grandchildren, for example, we are taking the focus of our prayers off of ourselves. In addition, when we are thinking and praying long, we open ourselves up to becoming a part of the answer to said prayers. When we pray for our children and grandchildren, we naturally consider how we can be a part of bringing those prayers to fruition. Praying in this way changes us and how we see and then interact with the world. We begin to see the world as God sees the world, and this corrects our tendency towards nearsightedness. Thinking and praying long will enable us to see and act beyond our own circumstances, beyond ourselves, and even beyond our present time and place.

Please turn with me now to Daniel 10. As we prepare to look at our passage for today, we first look back over Daniel's life. Daniel was one of the exiles brought to Babylon as a young man. He excelled early on, but that came only after remaining committed to his faith. As a teenager, just new to Babylon, Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the king's food. He knew that eating the king's food would violate Jewish dietary laws. This was one of the defining decisions in his life. Daniel's ten-day water and vegetable fast led to his first job with the administration. Soon Daniel and his three friends rose above all others being trained. Daniel could solve problems and interpret dreams like no other, rising quickly from prisoner to what equated to being the Prime Minister of Babylon. The key to Daniel's success, though, was not his intelligence or "his" ability to interpret dreams. No, Daniel's success came from his prayer practices. Before he did anything, before he made any decision, before he interpreted any dream, before he approached any problem, Daniel prayed.



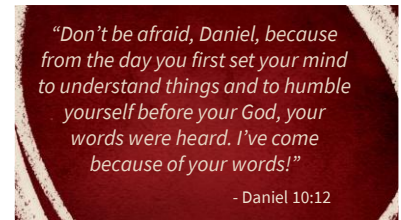
Daniel's prayer life was a regular part of his daily routine. He didn't just pray before he was thrown into the lion's den. No, Daniel prayed every day; three times a day in fact. Each time he prayed, there was a routine. Daniel would go to his upper room, would open the window facing Jerusalem, and he would kneel and pray. Three times a day, every day, Daniel would face Jerusalem to pray. Facing that direction kept him facing his dream. More on that later! This prayer practice, you might recall, is what got Daniel thrown into the lion's den. This was another decision point for Daniel. After hearing King Darius' decree outlawing prayer to anyone except himself, Daniel did what Daniel always did. Daniel chose to honor his faith over the king. We all know how that story turned out. God showed up and showed out, just as Daniel did every day of his life.

Two kings and one empire later, King Cyrus of Persia comes to power. For roughly sixty years, Daniel continued to pray three times a day, facing Jerusalem, keeping focused on his dream. Daily he prayed for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Every day for sixty years, Daniel prayed a prayer that he knew that he would never see come to fruition. He was thinking long and praying through. Well, leading into today's passage, Daniel has just received a vision foretelling the destruction of a rebuilt Jerusalem. Again, the rebuilding of Jerusalem had been the focus of Daniel's prayers all these years. Like the man planting carob trees, Daniel was praying for a future generation, for his children and grandchildren. That is why this latest vision foretelling the future destruction of Jerusalem devastated Daniel. This news leads Daniel to fast for three weeks. He is mourning what has not yet happened. Daniel mourns because he trusts that the word of God is and will be true.



After his fasting, Daniel and some friends are walking along the banks of the Tigris River. They then met a man whose face was like *“a flash of lightning”* and whose eyes *“were burning like torches.”* The man’s voice sounded like *“the roar of a crowd.”* All who were with Daniel fled, leaving him all alone.

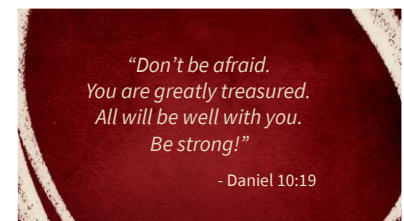
In verses 8-10 we read that left alone with this powerful heavenly man, Daniel loses his strength and falls face down. At the sound of the man’s voice, he falls into a trance but is lifted to his hands and knees by the man. In verse 11 the man encourages Daniel, telling him that he is *“greatly treasured”* and that he must hear the man’s words. Encouraged to stand up, Daniel does so. It is then that he hears words of great assurance. The heavenly man says to Daniel, *“Don’t be afraid, Daniel, because from the day you first set your mind to understand things and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard. I’ve come because of your words!”* The heavenly man is telling Daniel to take heart. He is saying, your prayers have been heard ever since the day that you first uttered a word. This vision is the response to Daniel’s faithful, heartfelt prayers.



The man then gives Daniel and us some insight into a world beyond our world. The man had been dispatched as Daniel’s prayers ascended to heaven. But it took him 21 days to reach Daniel. The spiritual leader of the evil power called ‘Persia’ was opposing him, preventing him from coming to Daniel. After 21 days, the angel Michael came and took on this evil spirit, allowing the man to come to Daniel. This part of the passage speaks of the battle between good and evil that is constantly going on all around us. We become aware of this battle when we are tempted to sin. Satan is trying to separate us from God. The counter is the voice of the Holy Spirit, guiding us to remain faithful to God.

Returning to our passage, picking up in verse 15, Daniel is invited to speak. Having been silent, his lips are touched, and he is able to speak. Daniel then shares that this vision bothered him deeply and sapped his strength. It is hard to come to terms that what he has been praying for these sixty years will come true – Jerusalem will be rebuilt – and then it will be destroyed once again in the end times. And, yet, through his faithful walk with God, Daniel has seen again and again that God has a plan and that God’s plan far exceeds what he could have ever envisioned or dreamed. From his water and vegetable fast in his first year in Babylon through his friends’ passing through the fiery furnace, from his rescue from the mouths of lions through his interpretation of several dreams, Daniel had experienced God’s faithfulness and goodness again and again.

The man then says to Daniel, *“Don’t be afraid. You are greatly treasured. All will be well with you. Be strong!”* With this reassurance and blessing, Daniel is greatly strengthened and encouraged. The heavenly man then departs. Daniel is ready to go on walking faithfully and humbly with his God. Now, think for a minute: What would it feel like to hear these words spoken over you? *“Don’t be afraid. You are greatly treasured. All will be well with you. Be strong!”* ...

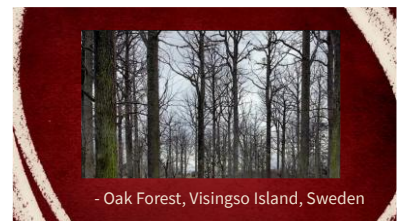


My friends, here is the reality: God feels the exact same way about you and about me. God has walked and will continue to walk with us through our fiery furnaces and lions’ dens, leading and guiding us as we open ourselves up to God’s ways and to God’s direction. The best and easiest way to open ourselves up to the will and way of God is to do just what Daniel did: practice regular daily prayer. Having conversations with God aligns our heart and will to God’s heart and will.

In the notes for this week's message, Batterson shares that drawing prayer circles is often a lot like climbing a mountain. The dream or promise or prayer might seem impossible at first, but as you circle it again and again, anything becomes possible. With each prayer there is a slight change in elevation. With each prayer, we draw closer to a response from God. Drawing prayer circles is a long, slow process. When we are tempted by the ASAP nature of our culture, Batterson invites us to remember that rarely does our first prayer request hit the bullseye of God's good, pleasing, and perfect will. Most of the time our prayers have to be refined. And by that, I mean that we have to be refined. Prayer changes us. Prayer opens us up to the possibility and mystery of God, allowing us to be shaped more and more into the image of our creator.



To illustrate thinking long another way and to add in the mystery of God element as well, I close with the story of the Visingso Oak Forest. This huge forest was a mystery for a long time because oak trees are not indigenous to this island. Yet there is this huge forest of oak trees on the island. Finally, in 1980, the mystery was solved. In that year the Swedish Navy received a letter from the Forestry Department informing them that their requested ship lumber was ready. Turns out, in 1829 the Swedish Parliament, knowing that it takes oak trees 150 years to mature and anticipating a shortage of lumber at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, ordered that 20,000 trees be planted and protected for the Navy. Now that is long thinking!



- Oak Forest, Visingso Island, Sweden

Think Long:  
Praying Into  
the Future

In chapter 13 of *The Circle Maker* Mark Batterson describes the importance of prayer postures. They often posture our hearts.

He shares that one of his favorite postures to take is one practiced by the Quakers. As I close this time together, we will pray using this model. For the first part of the prayer, I invite you to begin with your hands facing down. This symbolizes letting go of things. I will offer some prayer prompts as we pray in this posture, followed by some time for you to complete the prompts in your heart. Then, during the prayer, I will invite you to turn your hands over, opening them towards heaven. This symbolizes a posture of receptivity. Again, I will offer a prayer prompt, followed by a time of silence, providing space for you to complete the prayer starter. Any questions?... Let us pray...

O God, as we begin, we turn our hands downward, preparing to release some things to you. First, Lord, hear us now as we confess our sins... Lord, hear us now as we rebuke and release our fears, worries, and doubts... And, now, God, we release and relinquish control to you, control of our circumstances, control of our will, control of all things...

And now, Lord, we turn our hands over, emptied and now ready to receive from you. God, we receive the joy and peace that you offer through your love and grace... Lord, we open our hearts and minds to your guidance and direction... And, mighty Savior, we welcome the forgiveness that makes us new again, restoring us to our place in your family. We thank you Lord for the many ways that you are present to us in our lives. We humbly ask that you would use us this week, through our prayers, words, and actions, to bring your presence into the world as we seek to share our faith with others. Amen.



**GPS – Grow, Pray, Study**

- 1) *Grow*. How are you currently praying into the future? Is it for your children or for something else? What “fruit” do you hope to see from these prayer seeds?
- 2) *Pray*. Discouragement can come easily at times in our prayer life. This week, pray the first part of Daniel 10:19 over yourself and your loved one.
- 3) *Study*. Read Daniel 10:20 through the end of the book. Does this vision bring you hope or fear, joy or trembling? How does this vision connect to Revelation?