

Withstanding Spiritual Resistance to a Peaceful Transition of Power

Daniel was a Jewish teenager when he was exiled to Babylon. He was selected from among families of nobles and leaders in Israel to become trained in Babylonian ways, so he could help administer his own people, who were being exiled from their native Hebrew land to forcefully serve as “foreign workers” in the Babylonian empire.

He faithfully served four successive kings and ungodly kingdoms over a period of 70 years. Yet, his heart ached for his people and the desecration of their historic land, the holy city of Jerusalem and its holy temple. Though he was personally righteous before God, he identified with the historic sins of his people and prayed in intercession for them:

“O my God, incline Your ear and hear. Open Your eyes and look at our desolations and the city which is called by Your name, for we do not present our supplications before You for our righteousness, but for Your great mercies. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not defer, for Your own sake, O my God. For Your city and Your people are called by Your name” (Dan. 9:18-19).

Even while he was praying out to God, Daniel was visited by the angel Gabriel, who came to give him “skill to understand” the meaning of the astounding vision he had several years earlier (see Dan. 8) revealing “what shall happen in the latter time...[when] the end shall be” (Dan. 8:19, NKJV). Daniel “was astonished at the vision, but no one understood it” (Dan. 8:27). When God gives us spiritual insight, we need to pray for skill to understand it and wisdom to share or apply it at

the right time.

Consider This Discipline of Discipleship

Now, at least three years later, as a senior citizen and senior adviser to Cyrus, king of Persia (modern-day Iran), Daniel reflected again on the details of the vision he had previously and the meaning of the message of the vision, as explained by the angel (Dan. 8:21-27). In Chapter 10, he mourned for his people “three full weeks” and partially fasted, eating only simple food and abstaining from pastries, meat and wine as a discipline to physically express his spiritual mourning.

Apparently, in response to his seasons of prayer and fasting (Dan. 9:3, 10:2-3, 8; Matt. 9:13-15), Daniel had another visitation from a heavenly messenger. His appearance (Dan. 10:5-6) was overwhelmingly awesome (resembling the beings of Ezekiel 1), which left Daniel with his “face to the ground” in submission, but still hearing and understanding the sound of the messenger’s words about the future (Dan. 10:9).

God Hears and Answers Our Prayers

The messenger stood him up and informed him that “from the first day that you set your heart to understand this and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me for twenty-one days” (Dan. 10:12b-13a, MEV).

Please note these five spiritual lessons:

1. Our prayers on earth are heard in the heavens. (See Matt. 6:10.)
2. The answers to our prayers may be affected by demonic forces, which oppose God’s purposes and plans.
3. Our prayers need to be purposeful and consistent. Daniel

prayed specifically and fasted persistently for “three full weeks” (Dan. 10:2) and spiritual opposition was experienced for “twenty-one days” (Dan. 10:13).

4. Spiritual forces, both good and evil, are assigned to influence nations and national issues and leaders (Dan. 10:13, 20-21).

5. Our God-empowered prayers are mighty weapons “to the pulling down of strongholds,” bringing spiritual breakthrough (2 Cor. 10:4-5)!

Let us apply these lessons to today’s headlines.

I am writing this just a few hours before President-elect Joe Biden is formally inaugurated as the 46th President of the United States. Emotions are strong and tensions high as we face these political headwinds, fanned by spiritual forces of the unseen world. Yet, our prayers can see angels of protection released and spiritual breakthrough encountered.

Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase, *The Message*, reminds believers in 1 Timothy 2:1-3 to “Pray especially for rulers and their governments to rule well so we can be quietly about our business of living simply, in humble contemplation. This is the way our Savior God wants us to live.” This paraphrase of the apostle Paul goes on in verse eight to say, “... what I want mostly is for men to pray—not shaking angry fists at enemies but raising holy hands to God.”

A pastoral friend, Jim Tolle, has written that we should pray boldly for our current and future presidents, that their words and actions will be civil, truthful and edifying to our country. Pray that their lives and decisions will be guided by the wisdom coming from God’s own righteousness and that they would influence their followers to be peacemakers (Jer. 29:7).

In these tense days, we need to pray for the health, safety and well-being of these national leaders and their families

(Ezra 6:10), including those of Vice President Mike Pence and Vice President-elect, Kamala Harris. May they all experience a supernatural hedge of protection around them (Ps. 91:1-12).

Finally, I take a humble note of the fact that both Donald Trump and Joe Biden profess to be believers in Christ Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Since that is between them and God alone, and since none of us have arrived at perfection yet, I invite you to join me in praying God's Word over them:

"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities nor powers, neither things present nor things to come, neither height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39). {eo}

Gary Curtis served in full-time ministry for 50 years, the last 27 years of which he was part of the pastoral staff of The Church on The Way, the Van Nuys' California Foursquare church. Now retired, Gary continues to write a weekly blog at and frequent articles for digital and print platforms.