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Truths for Bitter Providences, Part 16

The doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints, has somewhat boorishly been described as, "Once saved always saved." Yet I hope by now you know that it is much more than this! The doctrine is NOT simply that if you are saved, you will remain saved. RATHER, it is that if you are saved, you are going to grow and mature in Christ. No one will be saved by the hair of their chin! Because of Christ the expectation is that we are going to flourish!

To the persecuted and maligned church Peter wrote this:

1 Peter 1:3-5, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead [NOT simply to remain in the faith to the end by a breath], to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you [how is this so?], who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

John 6:40, “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life [life pertaining to the age to come]; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”

Romans 5:10-11, “...if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. [And what does or will this look like?] And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”

Truly Scripture pictures the child of God entering into His presence not as refugees who barely made it, BUT as conquerors! Paul put it this way:

Romans 8:37 (ESV), “...in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”

That is the last and final point that God made when He set out to encourage Daniel. While in exile God’s people received from the Lord, through Daniel, a series of exhortations and encouragements NOT to grow weary in their love and devotion to the Lord. And we have now come to the tenth word of encouragement given to Daniel; i.e., there is much more to this life than meets the eye.

Difficult Message

Daniel 10:14, “Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet *future*.”

The “vision” spoken about here is the content of Daniel 11 & 12 which details the following:

- (1) The conflict that would occur between the Seleucid and Ptolemy empires during the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC and
- (2) The conflict that would occur beyond this involving God’s people up to the very end. Both chapters detail a world of suffering for the people of God.

That was the difficult message given to Daniel!

Now as Americans we don't like this because life here is so easy. Accordingly, we have cultivated a theology of "peace and safety" which absolutely has no biblical basis and which views this world as a pseudo-heaven for any and all who will trust God. Buddha got it right when he said, "Life is suffering" (this is the first noble truth of Buddhism). The difference between the Buddhist and the child of God, however, is that we have been brought into a Kingdom which in the end is going to conquer sorrow, sickness, sin, suffering, and death (Revelation 21:3-4)! As such, today we have joy in the Lord. Peter gave this hope to those struggling in his day:

1 Peter 1:8, "...though you have not seen Him [Christ], you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory."

Christ conquered the grave and so will we! Until then, we live in a state of sin and misery that is so brutal, a detailed exposé of it to a prophet, who had suffered more in his life than you and I most likely ever will, plunged him into a death spiral! This difficult message had now become a difficult calling!

A Difficult Calling

Daniel 10:15-17, "And when he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless. [IOW, he fell down all over again being flooded with a renewed state of weakness and sorrow. Recall, Daniel is a prophet which means that it was his responsibility to share this difficult message with his countrymen- recall that was his "burden!" Yet at this point, he had "become speechless!"] And behold, one who resembled a human being was touching my lips [as before he is strengthened enough so that he could initially carry on a conversation. The being here that touched him once again is NOT Christ, BUT the angel]; then I opened my mouth and spoke, and said to him who was standing before me, 'O my lord, as a result of the vision anguish has come upon me, and I have retained no strength. [the word for "anguish" could be translated as "writings," "twistings," or "tremblings"- it is used in the context of child birth. IOW, Daniel says here that he had become a complete and total wreck which zapped him of any and all strength to do anything, much less preach this message to the nation! Instead, he was a man in labor! In such a state Daniel asked...] For how can such a servant of my lord talk with such as my lord [he couldn't; he was in too much pain]? As for me, there remains just now no strength in me, nor has any breath been left in me.'"

Once again we are dealing with an 85 year old man who had seen it all in his life! And yet no amount of stress or suffering could have prepared him for what he had to do next; deliver

this message to his countrymen!

Who would want the responsibility to share with a person that their loved one has died?
Who would want to share that the tumor recently discovered in the child is terminal?

Yet that was the obligation given to this elderly man. After struggling close to 70 years along with God's people, it was his duty to share with the people of God that their suffering had just begun! As a result, he lost all strength. He was twisted and trembling inside. Clearly in himself, he couldn't and wouldn't carry out his divine calling!

Yet the next two chapters contain the message, so he obviously did find the strength to fulfill his calling. So where did the strength come from that enable Daniel to serve the Lord and carry out God's will?

The Glorious Renewing

Daniel 10:18, "Then *this* one with human appearance touched me again and strengthened me."

There you go! How did Daniel fulfill his calling? How is it that we will fulfill ours? There is only one way and that is by the grace of God "touching us and strengthening us"! This was Paul's prayer to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 3:14-16, "For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man."

Peter wrote this in reference to the exiled aliens and strangers of his day and their response to Satan's schemes:

1 Peter 5:9-10, "But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world [just as we've seen, trial and difficulty for God's people is part and parcel of this age; all God's people suffer as do you- yet notice...]. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you..."

Isaiah 40:31, "Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up *with* wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary."

The testimony that is found throughout the word of God is that at the moment of our

greatest need, the Lord comes and strengthens us!

1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation [trial/difficulty] has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it."

Christian, how does this divine enabling work? Experience tells us that many times we aren't so bold, we don't have the strength! At first Daniel didn't. But then God strengthened! What was involved in this strengthening?

The text continues, notice it involved both a "subjective" as well as an "objective" strengthening.

Daniel 10:19, "And he said, 'O man of high esteem [there is that language again and the assurance once again that Daniel was well-loved before God], do not be afraid. Peace be with you; take courage and be courageous!' Now as soon as he spoke to me, I received strength and said, 'May my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.'"

From this we note four elements to the divine enabling. First, do not be afraid. Really this is the negative way of saying "love the Lord!"

1 Peter 4:17-18a, "By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment [isn't that the backdrop of what Daniel was called to do? God's people were in exile on account of the judgment of God. Well they didn't need to respond in fear. Rather they could have confidence and hope...]; because as He is, so also are we in this world. [IOW, because we are God's children, we walk around bearing HIS status such that we know who we are, whose we are, and where we're going! And now the clincher...] There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear..."

The calling that the angel gave to Daniel in this text was to banish fear; which put positively means that he was to live in the love of Christ!

We can be found loving all kinds of things in this life, can't we? In fact to determine the object of your love just look at how you react when "it" is threatened. Whatever sends you into a tailspin reveals the object of your love. The angel here called Daniel to banish all fear of losing health, worldly security, an earthly future, etc. and in its place be satisfied with loving the Lord alone!

2 Corinthians 5:14-15, "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."

Such was the call to Daniel! *“Daniel! Take your eye and focus off of the temporal, and place it on the eternal. Don’t fear losing what you cannot keep! Rather, devote your life to loving Him whom you will never lose!”* That is the call and so the means to be “strengthen in the inner man!” Notice the second way we are strengthened...

Secondly, Daniel was told, peace be with you. The “peace” referenced here could be one of two ideas:

- (1) Either peace with God (which comes from a saving relationship with Christ)- this is positional peace and so a call to salvation- or
- (2) A peace on account of God- which would be an existential peace.

As Daniel already had a saving relationship with God, we conclude that the latter idea is the focus here. *Daniel, know the peace of God which only comes from entrusting yourself and your future to the Lord.* Paul wrote it this way:

Philippians 4:6-7, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [you know the essence of prayer is a Godward look of dependence/trust. When this is the case, notice what happens...] And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

And so it was in Daniel’s life. The divine enabling occurred only as Daniel himself placed his trust in the Lord. In fact, everything that the angel exhorted here presupposes trust on the part of Daniel (which no doubt is why God showed him “the Lord” whom he really served [cf. Daniel 10:4-9]). With this beatific vision before the prophet (just like Isaiah), Daniel embraced the message of the Lord!

This is so important! In Christianity the calling is NOT to sit around and wait for the Lord to infuse boldness into your being; that will never happen! Rather, we are called to trust the Lord, take Him at His word and so “entrust our souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right” (1 Peter 4:19)! If we do not do this, all the Bible study, Scripture memory, sermonizing, and devotions that we might do will be but empty words!

Thirdly, Daniel was told to take courage. The idea behind this word is to be strong or strengthened. Yet the nuance is best seen when it is recognized that this is the word used twelve times in reference to the Pharaoh and Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart was harden.” The idea is an unwavering heart; resolute; immovable!

This is a serious problem when it comes to God’s people. We tend to be timid and afraid. We don’t want pain and so we vacillate when it comes to our service- opting for the route

of least resistance/least pain. The apostle Paul made this observation:

Ephesians 4:14, “As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.”

The opposite of this would be one who commits himself to doing what is right regardless of the results or the cost! That was the calling of God here. If Daniel was going to be “strengthened in the inner man,” he had to commit himself to the Lord and His word regardless of the cost! That’s the call that rests on all our lives! You want to serve the Lord? It is going to cost you! How much? Everything! Listen to the words of J.J. Watt (defensive end for the Houston Texans) and his commitment to the perishable wreath:

I have a limited amount of time to build a career out of football and be the best that I can be at this job. When this job (football) is over, I have the rest of my life to do what I want to do with my time.

Right now my job is to watch film, workout, and treat my body right. When I get done with football, then I can relax and drink as many beers as I want and hang out and be a regular guy. Right now, I am a football player and I will sacrifice whatever is necessary to be the best. (Watt, 2014)

Family of God, when this life is over then we can relax, drink, hang out, and take it easy. Right now, we are Christians in a war and we must sacrifice whatever is necessary to be faithful to the Lord (cf. Matthew 5:29-30)! That is the idea here. Daniel, get busy serving the Lord; don’t worry about anything else!

Then finally Daniel is told to step out in faith and be courageous. This is the exact same word as the one before, however, on account of the repetition, the nuance becomes quite active. So be courageous/trust God, but then step out in faith and do it! It is as Paul exhorted the Ephesians:

Ephesians 6:13b-14a, “...and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm...”

The calling is active. Step out in faith, trust the Lord, and so serve Him! You know, sometimes the adolescent bird needs a push from the nest, right? That is what is behind Exodus 19.

Exodus 19:4, “You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself.”

In Israel, there were eagles that roosted on the side of a mountain. When it came time for the eaglets to fly, the mother bird would push the baby out of the nest, and then swoop

down, catch it on its back, and bring it back to the nest. This is repeated over and over until the baby bird learns to fly.

That is what God oft-times does in our lives. He sends us practicums, what I call field trips (in the form of inconveniences, trials, sickness, etc.) which force us trust the Lord.

So the final call to Daniel which would result in being “strengthened in the inner man” was to step out in faith and so trust the Lord in time and space! If Daniel would do that (simply by getting up and *attempting* to proclaim the message), he would find the strength of God undergirding him and enabling him!

Yes, Daniel was given a difficult calling. Yet the grace of God was sufficient if Daniel would but take God at His word and act. If he did this, the Lord would strengthen him in the inner man! Yet God promised him even more!

The Objective Strengthening

Notice the objective strengthening of the Lord.

Daniel 10:20a, “Then he said, ‘Do you understand why I came to you?...’”

This is a rhetorical question indicating that in response to Daniel’s prayer and fasting, the Lord was going to give him much more than he asked for. Recall Daniel was concerned for his people, their recalcitrant heart, and the status and welfare of Jerusalem. Yet the message that Daniel would receive would take Daniel from his current world all the way to the end of the age! He wanted to know about God’s people, yet God opened his eyes to behold an unseen world beyond his wildest imaginings! He discovered this:

- That demons and angels are engaged in warfare on account of the beloved.
- A little more of the nature and the glory of the One who currently rules over this world!
- How important he and God’s people were to the Lord- at all times they were “the beloved of God”!

How we need to see this as well! There is so much more to this world, to Christ’s Kingdom, than meets the eye. So often we get so caught up in small, insignificant things concerning our rights, wants, and needs. God’s Kingdom is so much bigger. And if we would grasp this we would live much more by faith than we currently do!

There is a Universe War (not world war) going on as I speak! We therefore must see that what is going on in our lives are but small skirmishes which amazingly have their significance, but only because God cares so much for you and me. Accordingly, it behooves

us to get our focus off the present and place it on the Kingdom of God and so “the things above”!

Daniel 10:20b, “But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia; so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come.”

Gabriel had to give Daniel this message quick because the battle was raging and he was missing it! Again, big things were going on, universal things, and eternal things! Speaking not only of Daniel’s day, but all days up to the Second Coming of Christ we read:

Daniel 12:1, “Now at that time [at the end of this world] Michael, the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people, will arise...”

One of the responsibilities of Michael this moment is the protection and care of you and me! He “stands guard over us”! The Hebrew writer speaking of angels wrote:

Hebrews 1:14, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?”

In Daniel’s day this meant again NOT a world war, BUT a universe war which involved angels and demons battling it out! Think of it: Satan fought Michael for the body of Moses (Jude 9), how much more is he fighting for the soul of Christ’s bride, the church?!

So how is it that we endure? How is it that we not only persevere, BUT we thrive? God ever and always is watching out for us and so has commissioned His angels to watch over you and me!

Daniel 10:21 & 11:1, “However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. [Again, that is chapters 11-12] Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these *forces* except Michael your prince. And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I arose to be an encouragement and a protection for him.”

Family of God in warfare, what would it mean to you to have a highly trained soldier tell you that not only he, but also his comrades would stand vigil over you and your community as you sleep, wake, and go about your business? Essentially, that is what Daniel and all God’s children were told here. We are not alone in our sojourn.

- God has raised up a fellowship- you and I- to walk with one another and so encourage each other.
- The Lord also has commissioned His angels to watch over us to protect, defend, and fight for us.
- Christ Jesus Himself is with us always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 20:20)!

So how is it that we thrive? The Lord Himself has seen to it that we will!

Bibliography

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