

MARCH 2014

TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

He is the living
God and he
endures forever;
his kingdom will
not be destroyed,
his dominion will
never end.

Daniel 6:26



The Book of Daniel:
Faithfulness in Difficult Days



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TODAY WITH PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Bible Institute

Faithful Living in Difficult Days



Recently, a *USA Today* article gained a great deal of attention. It was titled: "Atheist 'mega-churches' look for nonbelievers." The reporter noted that at atheist churches people gathered to sing, hear an inspirational message, and spend time in quiet reflection. "The only thing missing was God."

Sadly, the reporter's statement is an accurate reflection of our culture that has everything—but God. In a world plagued by increasing violence, declining morality, disaster, and war, many feel we *must* be living in the end times. Rather than recoiling in fear, this awareness should raise our interest in biblical prophecy and increase our longing for the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It should inspire each of us to dare to be like Daniel, one who spoke truth and remained faithful to God, even when he stood alone.

This month, in *Today in the Word*, we will study the Old Testament book of Daniel. As the book begins, we find the Jewish nation exiled and living under Babylonian control. God's chosen people are held captive; and Daniel is selected—along with a group of smart, good-looking, and intelligent young men—to live and serve in the royal palace. But Daniel is even more exceptional than the others since God had given him the ability to interpret dreams and visions.

In the book, Daniel interprets two types of dreams: those dreamt by the kings he serves and those given to him by God. The book of Daniel is often compared to and read along with the book of Revelation, since Daniel's dreams contain extensive prophecy regarding the end times. The book of Revelation is called the "apocalypse" of the New Testament, while the book of Daniel is referred to as the "apocalypse" of the Old Testament.

In Matthew 24, Jesus Himself mentions the book of Daniel in relation to prophecy. He says, "Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)" (v. 15). Jesus implies that those living in the end times will need to read and understand the book of Daniel in order to know how to live faithfully. This means that we today need to study this Scripture, read it, and learn what faithfulness looks like in difficult days.

In addition to learning more about biblical prophecy, we will see that even during times of great distress, God raises up holy men and women to bring Him glory and lead His people. God chose individuals like Daniel, who did good in the face of evil, defied fire and lions, stood firm, and pursued righteousness.

As we follow Christ, we, too, are called to remain faithful. We must dare to be like Daniel, even in the face of a godless culture.

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by John Koessler



Unseen Powers

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy," Shakespeare's Hamlet declared. The prophet Daniel would have agreed. Chapter 10 of the book of Daniel describes a mysterious being who appeared to God's prophet to explain a troubling vision. The similarity between this figure and the description of the risen Savior in Revelation 1:13–15 has led some biblical scholars to conclude that this was a *theophany*, a vision of Christ prior to the Incarnation. Others think it was an angelic being.

Daniel had prayed and fasted for three weeks asking God to grant him understanding (Dan. 10:1–3). Although Daniel was heard as soon as he uttered the words of his prayer, the appearance of this heavenly visitor was delayed due to resistance from "the prince of the Persian kingdom" (Dan. 10:13). This "prince" appears to have been another spiritual being who was similar to the angel Michael but was defeated by him. Elsewhere in the Bible, Michael is described as an "archangel" (1 Thess. 4:16; Jude 1:9). The ordinary world in which we live is affected by unseen powers that seek to hinder God and are opposed by His servants.

The apostle Paul refers to these powers in Colossians 1:16, where he speaks of invisible "thrones," "powers," "rulers," and "authorities." He uses similar language in Ephesians 6:12, when he says that our struggle: "is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

The medieval church speculated in great detail about the nature of the hierarchy that exists between these spiritual beings. The apostle's language, however, merely implies that a hierarchy of some kind exists. It does not provide the kind of detail that would allow us to rank these beings in any definitive way. Paul does say that Jesus Christ already existed prior to all created beings and is superior to all powers whether visible or invisible (Col. 1:17). In view of this, the order and rank that may exist among the angelic powers hardly matters. Christ's supremacy combined with Daniel's example indicates that a believer's prayer can affect the unseen powers. As the hymn writer William Cowper observed, "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon their knees."

For Further Study

To learn more about the unseen spiritual powers, read *Everything the Bible Says About Angels and Demons* by Robert C. Newman (Bethany House).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Elena Maffei

Encounters with Jesus: Do Not Be Afraid



Dear readers, we started our “Encounters with Jesus” series to share the stories of Jesus’ presence in your lives. We are grateful for your letters, where you describe some of your most precious memories. Thank you for writing to us, and thank you for the encouragement of your stories!

This month, we’d like to feature two testimonies from our readers. Katharina, a reader from Seminole, Florida, called her encounter with Jesus “The Nightmare Voyage”:

In 1956, after being accepted by the SIM as missionaries, we were now ready to set sail for Liberia in West Africa—my husband, Tom, our two little boys, and I. At the New York harbor, we boarded the African Glade, an old warship converted into a freighter that carried 12 passengers. By morning we were engulfed in a terrible storm. The ship was pounded by a hurricane, causing it to pitch and roll from side to side. Dishes slid off dining room tables, crashing to the floor. My son’s crib slid across the floor until the first mate tied it to the wall.

The storm lasted several days. During this time, Jim, our 2 year old, became gravely ill with a temperature of 105 degrees. There was no doctor on board. Tom and I cried out to the Lord for help. The captain offered me penicillin, which I gratefully accepted, but it had no effect. I looked up at the black stormy sky and talked with God: “Lord, You know we are on our way

to Liberia to serve You, and yet we are sorely tested with our sick child and this awful storm. Things are looking dismal.”

But God was already answering our prayer. Another passenger was an RN. She brought a crate full of medicine, which was now down in the ship’s cargo hold. She gave the crew permission to bring the crate up, and gave Jim a shot. By morning, his fever was coming down. We rejoiced with thanksgiving for this great miracle. Soon we were sailing out of the storm and into beautiful sunshine. This event brought us to a close encounter with Jesus, showing us He is holding us close even in the storms of life.

Another letter came from Wesley, who is only 21 years old but is already a thoughtful and accomplished writer. Wesley is an inmate in one of the U.S. correctional institutions and hopes to be released in July of this year. After getting out of prison, he wants to help at-risk teens who are headed down the same path he once took. This is the letter that Wesley wrote to God in January 2013:

I am writing this letter to try and express to You how much I appreciate You and the reasons why. I say I will “try” simply because I don’t know if it is possible to truly convey my love for You because of all You have done for me. For many years I was unaware of who You were; You were my “secret admirer,” and sadly, mostly unnoticed by me. You would express your fervent love and deep compassion for me. Day after day, You tried to catch my

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TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

The Book of Daniel: Faithfulness in Difficult Days

When we talk about exports today, we mean exporting goods in a globalized trade. But in Daniel's day, the Israelites themselves were the exports—to the Babylonian empire. Those of noble birth and of great promise were removed from the Promised Land and brought to Babylon, where they were indoctrinated by a foreign culture and brought up to be the next generation of leaders. With the goal of forgetting their past, they were encouraged to look forward to the power and gifts that their new lives could bring.

Yet for those who loved God, questions abounded. How could God be counted on to be faithful in a foreign land? And how would the people remain faithful without their own community's rituals and leaders? The story of Daniel addresses these questions, showing how a group of young men stood up to the most powerful nation in the world. Their faithfulness in the midst of trials and persecution displayed their faith, but more importantly, the faithfulness of their God.

This month in *Today in the Word* we will look at the book of Daniel through the lens of faithfulness. We will see how God used both faithful and faithless people to fulfill His purposes. We hope and pray that you will be encouraged and continue to walk faithfully with the King, seeing how He is using you and others to bring about His purposes in our world today. And as always, thank you for your faithful support of the ministry of *Today in the Word!*

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Introduction and Historical Background

In his song “My Deliverer,” the musician Rich Mullins describes the coming of Jesus, the world’s deliverer. But how can we make sense of our deliverance in Christ when we see believers in hard situations today? The book of Daniel helps to provide an answer to that troubling question.

age? It is critical to note that God was in control, directing the actions of the individuals and nations around Israel. God is faithful, in good times and in bad. He works out His plans through the righteous and the faithful, as well as the wicked and unfaithful.

Our study this month focuses on Daniel and the exiles who were taken into captivity to Babylon. Our verse today illustrates the importance of language, for it shows that while God’s people were in rebellion against Him and Babylon conquered them, it is ultimately God who allowed them to be taken. In fact, God did not just allow it to happen; He actually delivered Jehoiakim the king into Nebuchadnezzar’s hand (v. 2).

Some may question how God could allow such a horrible event to befall His chosen people. How could He allow His people to be attacked and hauled off in bond-

The Lord delivered
Jehoiakim king of
Judah into his hand,
along with some of
the articles from the
temple of God.

Daniel 1:2

While Nebuchadnezzar took the people, as well as articles from the temple, to show his absolute control over all areas of their lives, he could not take away their God. For other cultures, this would have been a devastating loss. Yet for followers of the One True Lord, they knew that they could have hope in a future

that looked past their current oppression.

We serve a God who is faithful and in control of both the large events in our world as well as the things that affect us as individuals on a daily basis. As we study this month, let us seek to be faithful to Him in all areas of our lives.

Apply the Word

When people ask why God has allowed evil to occur, it is important to remember His sovereign hand over all of creation. Though He doesn’t always reveal His reasons, He does reveal His love. Pray today for those who need to understand this truth, as well as experience His love through the Holy Spirit and through people just like you, His body here on earth.

Pray with Us

Throughout Moody’s history, our trustees have contributed their leadership skills, experience, and knowledge to advance the ministries of Moody. We thank God for their service and invite you to pray for them today.

Faithful Service: Chosen for Work in a Foreign Land

In our busyness, serving others can be downright exhausting. Whether you are a parent serving your children, a son or daughter who cares for ailing parents, or a person reaching out to the poor and oppressed, the act of giving can be draining. Yet most of our service is done voluntarily. Imagine how much harder it would be if it was not a choice!

In ancient times, when foreigners conquered a country they often exported a number of people. Those from the lower classes would become slaves, and members of the upper class were trained in the culture of the new society. If upper-class leaders were indoctrinated into the new culture, the rest of the people would follow, which would further solidify their allegiance to their new rulers.

In this passage, attractive and wise youth from the royal family and the nobility of the Israelites were selected for Babylonian

training. These youth were the future of the Israelites, and their spiritual and cultural development would affect the outcome for the rest of the people. These youth were supposed to learn the language and literature of the Chaldeans in order to serve the king's court.

Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people.

Ephesians 6:7

This was worldview instruction, and the goal was to transform their perspective and place a foreign culture with its own gods at the center of daily life. This extended to the point of even changing their names! With the very best teaching, training, and even food that money could buy, they were to be

trained to do service within the kingdom. Thankfully, as we will see in the coming days, these youth had already received faithful instruction from their families and culture, and some could withstand even the strongest onslaught.

Apply the Word

We are called to raise up leaders for God's kingdom. It is our responsibility to train young men and women for service in the ways of the Lord. Otherwise the surrounding culture will do it for us. Is there a young person you can mentor and encourage in Christ? And we can always be faithful in prayer for the next generation of God's servants.

Pray with Us

Ken Heulitt, chief financial officer, would appreciate the prayer of the *Today in the Word* community for God's provision for Moody in 2014. God has always been faithful to Moody through the faithful giving of our donors.

Faithful “Feasting”: Our Bodies as Temples

The most popular New Year’s resolution is to lose weight. For most of history, weight was rarely an issue, since most people were one crop failure away from starvation. Yet as our culture has shifted to worshiping food and body image, our perspectives on both topics has radically changed as well.

Food and worship have always been closely linked, which we can see throughout the Old Testament and in Daniel’s resolution not to defile himself by eating the king’s food and drink. While this passage has sometimes been used to promote vegetarianism, the point here is not that fancy food is somehow unholy and eating only vegetables will bring us closer to God! The food from the king’s table would have been sacrificed to idols; by eating it, Daniel and the rest of the Israelites in training would defile themselves and would have to purify themselves ac-

ording to Levitical law. Instead of compromising their integrity or refusing to eat the king’s food outright, God was working behind the scenes, allowing Daniel to propose a third way. Notice it was not due to Daniel’s own power or smooth speech.

You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20

The text is clear that Daniel asked for permission not to defile himself. He did not demand or mistreat the official. Even though the official was scared for his own life, God caused him to have compassion on Daniel. A ten-day trial period was approved for Daniel and his companions to be given only vegetables and water. At the end of the trial,

they were allowed to go on with their diet. When it was time to stand before the king, none were found to be their equal. In fact, when questioned, they were found to be ten times better than anyone else in the whole kingdom—a sign of God’s favor on their lives.

Apply the Word

What we do with our bodies—including what we put into them—are acts of worship to God. Is the Holy Spirit prompting you to fast from foods or practices that you have turned into idols? Do you need a biblical perspective on body image? Pray that God would allow you to see food and your body in light of Christ’s death and resurrection.

Pray with Us

While praying for the Moody finances, please mention in your prayers the staff of our Investment Accounting department: Daphne Hussey, Marilou Logan, and Andrea Palmer-Reed. May the Lord guide every step of their personal and professional life!

A Faithless King: Foolish Policy in Dark Times

After the Civil War, many Southern states instituted what were known as “Black Codes,” laws used to keep African-Americans in a state of bondage. These horrible, racist legal mandates had the same flavor as the decree issued by Nebuchadnezzar in our passage today.

Nebuchadnezzar, clearly sleep-deprived from his disturbing dreams, desired for the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers—the ancient “cabinet” members of the day—not only to interpret his dream, but also to tell him the dream as well. Promising death if they could not do it and great rewards if they could, the king put his leaders in a horrible position.

Realizing that their lives were at stake, they probably told the astrologers, those who would have been the most respected since they interpreted the divine signs in the heavens, to tell the

king the impossibility of his request. They argued back, “No one can reveal it to the king except for the gods, and they do not live among humans” (v. 11). The stage was set for the living God to intervene and display His glory.

In arguably one of the rashest and ill-advised decisions ever, Nebuchadnezzar ordered the death of all the wise men of Babylon. Talk about cutting the rug from under you! Not only would such an act destroy the leadership of the kingdom, but who would be left to train up the next generations of

leaders? This would have left the kingdom vulnerable to attack from individuals from within as well as from foreign enemies, and the economic and the governmental structures that would provide for a strong army would fall apart. Thankfully, God can use the most ridiculously unwise decree to show His glory and faithfulness through His people.

The wise store up
knowledge, but the
mouth of a fool
invites ruin.

Proverbs 10:14

Apply the Word

As Christ’s followers, we should take care that we do not enact foolish policies. When we do encounter foolish policies, we should pray that God’s glory would shine through faithful people who can overturn destructive initiatives. We can have confidence that God’s will was not blocked by Nebuchadnezzar, and He cannot be thwarted by any human government.

Pray with Us

As we continue to pray for the Investment Accounting department, please add Tonya Reed and Rohan McLachlan to your prayer list. The service of this department’s team may be behind the scenes, but it’s important for all Moody’s ministries.

Faithful Friends: Who Will Be Your Side?

In J. R. R. Tolkien's trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo and Sam work together to bring the one ring of power back to Mordor in order to destroy it—and with it, the reign of evil. They face foes and obstacles and nearly die. Through thick and thin, Sam stood by Frodo as his loyal friend, encouraging him to complete his arduous task.

Like Sam and Frodo, Daniel and his friends were living in dark days. Nebuchadnezzar had just issued a decree that all of the wise men of the kingdom were going to be put to death because no one could tell him his dream or interpret it. Upon learning about the events from the commander of the king's guard, Daniel went directly to the king to ask for more time. He proceeded to go to his friends and asked them to join him in beseeching God so that they and the rest of the wise men of Babylon would not be executed.

One who has
unreliable friends
soon comes to ruin,
but there is a friend
who sticks closer
than a brother.

Proverbs 18:24

At some point in the night, God revealed the mystery to Daniel. Daniel's reaction to this provision from God is helpful and instructive for us. He went back to God and literally sings His praises, ascribing to God the wisdom, power, knowledge and thanks that are due.

While he makes mention of how God revealed the dream to him, he also states, "you have made known to us the dream of the king." Daniel acknowledged his friends who had been by his side throughout the night, pleading for the God of their ancestors to once again show up in a miraculous way. Show up He did, and Daniel proceeded to give Him the praise due His name.

Daniel recognized that God had blessed the prayers of His people when they joined together in intercession.

Apply the Word

When times are hard, do you ask for others to intercede for you? Increasingly today people count their virtual friends on social media more than the relationships in their daily lives. It is easy to forget the importance of coming together. Reconnect with a friend and ask if you can share requests and pray together. Where two or three are gathered, God is there with us (Matt. 18:20).

Pray with Us

The first Wednesday in March traditionally marks MBI Day of Prayer. Moody president Dr. Paul Nyquist invites you, as a valued member of the Moody family, to join us in prayer for Moody, for the individual needs of the Moody community, and for our nation.

Faithful Interpreters: God and Man Working Together

The founder of the Salvation Army said to his fellow “soldiers”: “Faith and works should travel side by side, step answering to step, like the legs of men walking. First faith, and then works; and then faith again, and then works again—until they can scarcely distinguish which is the one and which is the other.”

In today’s reading, we see faith and works going hand-in-hand. Daniel received the word of God, and went about putting that wisdom into action. Upon receiving the vision of Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams, Daniel went to the king and told his head guard to refrain from murdering all of the wise men of Babylon because he would interpret the king’s dream. When the king asked whether Daniel was able to interpret the dream, Daniel did not answer proudly. Of course Daniel could not interpret the dream! But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.

To this end I
strenuously contend
with all the energy
Christ so powerfully
works in me.

Colossians 1:29

Daniel went on to tell Nebuchadnezzar his dream about a large statue made of different substances. Each of the different substances represented different kingdoms, with the last one symbolizing the kingdom that will not be destroyed.

Interpreters have disagreed about the exact meaning of the middle kingdoms, but it is clear that God Himself will set up a kingdom that will not be destroyed “nor will it be left to another people” (v. 44). God’s spiritual kingdom has been inaugurated through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and all who confess Christ as Lord are brought into this empire (Col. 1:13). It will be fulfilled when Jesus comes again (Rev. 5:10; 11:15; 20:4, 6; 22:5).

After hearing this dream interpreted, Nebuchadnezzar bowed before Daniel (v. 46). One day all will bow before the Lord, acknowledging His power over us.

Apply the Word

We have been granted the benefits of this kingdom. We have the opportunity and the privilege of being used by God to continue His work and minister to others. When things go right, are you a faithful servant who gives the glory to God? God desires to do amazing things through you for His kingdom, but wants to use you for His purposes, not the other way around.

Pray with Us

Thank you for supporting with your prayers the service of Janet Stiven, who recently was appointed vice president and general counsel at Moody. Let’s pray that in her many responsibilities at Moody, she will continually draw strength and wisdom from God.

Faithless Worship: The Cost of Bowing to Worthless Idols

Martin Luther once said, “God our Father has made all things depend on faith so that whoever has faith will have everything, and whoever does not have faith will have nothing.”

That certainly holds true for faith in worship as well. When the Babylonians were forced to bow down to the massive gold statue, they were putting their faith in a worthless and meaningless idol. This worship ceremony was complete with all of the pomp and circumstance of a worship gathering, complete with musicians, instruments, announcements, and even decrees!

Formerly, when
you did not know
God, you were
slaves to those
who by nature
are not gods.

Galatians 4:8

by fire, but for an eternity, not just a few tortured minutes! This massive idol, standing about 10 stories high, would have been imposing. Yet in light of eternity, it was nothing but a huge distraction, directing people away from the one true God.

The Lord had already revealed himself to Nebuchadnezzar though Daniel’s interpretation of his vision. Not only did Nebuchadnezzar fail to learn that lesson, he now set up this punishment for all people from every nation. No one would be excluded from punishment for failure to fall prostrate before a false deity.

The text is explicit that bowing down to the image was not merely an oath of loyalty or political allegiance, but one of worship (v. 6). The cost for failing to worship this created image was immediate death by fire in a blazing furnace.

While the Bible is clear about idol worship, prohibiting it in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and describing idols as “man-made gods of wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or eat or smell” (Deut. 4:28), we too often fail to take into account the cost and reality of idol worship in our day.

Of course, the eternal cost of bowing to this worthless idol was also punishment

Apply the Word

As John Calvin noted, our hearts are idol factories. Faithless worship of ourselves, others, objects, or activities can be harder to spot than a giant gold statue. Being in a spiritual community—Sunday school class, small group, or accountability partnership—can help us be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s conviction when we are tempted toward idolatry.

Pray with Us

Spring break begins tomorrow on Moody’s Chicago campus. Spend time in prayer for our undergraduate students as they are getting ready to visit their families, go on mission trips, or tour the country with student music ensembles.

Faithful People: A Call to Be Set Apart

In most western countries, Christians have basic freedoms of religious belief. But for those living under repressive regimes, claiming to be a follower of Christ can mean risking not just your own life but also the lives of your family, friends, and all of your acquaintances. Doing what is right according to God's law can be extremely costly!

In our reading today, the leaders of the land must have already been amazed at how quickly some of the Jews had risen in power. These foreigners were being placed in the highest levels of society! Out of jealousy, the leaders sought a way to bring them down. They observed that the Jews were not following the directions of their king. There was no way that the secular leaders were not going to let the Jews off the hook for their act of spiritual, cultural, and national defiance! They brought their concern directly to the king. To Nebuchadnezzar's credit, he asked Shadrach,

The LORD your God
has chosen
you . . . to be
his people,
his treasured
possession.

Deuteronomy 7:6

Meshach, and Abednego if the accusations brought against them were true, and gave them fair warning for the punishment for their crime if they failed to follow his order.

Reminiscent of the showdown between God and the Baal worshipers at Mount Carmel (see 1 Kings 18), Nebuchadnezzar stood with the Baal worshipers, arguing that might makes right. If the Jews failed to do as he ordered—bowing down and worshiping the idol—they would immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace. You can almost hear the sneer in his voice

when you read the question that Nebuchadnezzar asked Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: "What god will be able to rescue you from my hand?" (Dan. 3:15). What God (or Son of God) could ever rescue people from the burning fire of punishment?

Apply the Word

When we do what is right, it often makes other people uncomfortable, whether because it pricks their conscience or they are not used to people standing up for the truth or they are jealous of our faith. How are you taking a stand against idols our culture sees as culturally acceptable—greed, power, and lust—that separate us from one another and from God?

Pray with Us

Would you uphold in prayer our Music department faculty and staff? As spring break begins today, many of them will be leading student music ensembles tours. Pray for professors Ronald Denison, David Gauger, Xiangtang Hong, Jae Hyeok Jang, and Jori Jennings.

Faithful Deliverance: God's Ability to Save

In Luke 16, Jesus tells the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man, who is being tormented in hell, begs for Abraham to send someone from the dead to warn his family and friends. Abraham replied, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are Old Testament examples of God's power over death. Not only did the three Hebrews refuse to bow down to the image that Nebuchadnezzar set up, they defied him by declaring the ability of their "foreign" God. Echoing David's stand against Goliath and foreshadowing Jesus' comments to the Sanhedrin, these three Israelites stood before the most powerful man in the world at the time and told him that they served a God who was able to save them, even from the clutches of death. What's more, even if God did not save them, they still refused to bow down.

The Lord your God
is with you, the
Mighty Warrior
who saves.

Zephaniah 3:17

In a fit of rage, Nebuchadnezzar superheated the furnace to the point that the guards who threw the three men in perished from its heat. Yet instead of dying, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego ended up in the fire, walking around unbound with one who "looks like a son of the gods" (v. 25).

Most theologians argue that this was a *theophany*, a pre-incarnational sighting of Jesus joining His people in the midst of their suffering and saving them from the fiery pit, a beautiful analogy for what He would do

for us in His finished work of death, burial, and resurrection.

When Nebuchadnezzar saw that there was no physical evidence of the three ever being near fire, he turned his focus to proclaiming their God and promoting Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in their positions in the province of Babylon.

Apply the Word

When you are tempted to give in to the idols that tempt you, do you believe that God is able to save you from their destructive patterns? We serve the same God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, a God who may not save us from the trial but who has promised to be with us and be faithful to deliver us into His presence.

Pray with Us

Continue to support in prayer Moody's Music professors—Brian Lee, Betty-Ann Lynerd, Elizabeth Naegele, Gary Rownd, and H. E. Singley. Their dedicated work brings fruit in the lives and ministry of our students, helping them to discover God's calling.

Faithful Judgment: God's Greatness

In his book *The Problem of Pain*, C. S. Lewis wrote, “We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” God’s judgments often awaken us to God’s desires for our life.

The fourth chapter of Daniel could act as a stand-alone book. Beginning with a powerful introduction by Nebuchadnezzar, it provides a glimpse of the completed tapestry before the story and its individual threads are stitched together. The king speaks of the miracles and mighty wonders of the Most High God, declaring the eternal nature of His kingdom and His reigning dominion from one generation to the next. From what we have seen of Nebuchadnezzar’s response to God up to this point, this seems out-of-place—until we realize what is to follow.

He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.

Deuteronomy 32:4

As the narrator, Nebuchadnezzar lays out his dream, in which a tall tree that provides shade for the wild animals and fruit for all people is then designated for destruction. The purpose of the dream is made clear to the reader in verse 17, which declares that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth, able to give and take away from the highest to the lowest. Even in judgment, God is faithful and just, using this punishment to remind everyone that He is ultimately in control—no one, no matter how great, is outside the reach of His hand.

Now when we look again at the introduction, we see that Nebuchadnezzar has learned his lesson, and he now desires for those in his kingdom to join him in worshipping God. Judgment is never a joyous occasion, but we know that God had a plan and that Nebuchadnezzar could sing God’s praises at the end.

Apply the Word

God is faithful even during times of judgment. While pain in our life can result from a number of sources, at times it is used by God to bring us back to Himself. If this is a time in your life when God is on His “megaphone,” follow the example of Nebuchadnezzar in this chapter and be quick to respond and turn to Him.

Pray with Us

Today, please include in your prayers the Music department’s faculty and staff: Terry Strandt, Cynthia Uitermarkt, Un-Young Whang, Lauren Quiles, and Christopher Wheeler. They share God’s gift of music with students and audiences.

Turning Back to a Faithful God

Jean-Paul Satre, a French existentialist and one of the leading proponents of atheism in the twentieth century, possibly turned to Jesus in his dying days. While many of his acquaintances dismissed his interest in Messianic Judaism as a passing fad, it is true that God can move any heart toward Himself.

In our reading today, Nebuchadnezzar called Daniel to interpret his dream, but he could see that Daniel was withholding some information. When Nebuchadnezzar finally pressed Daniel to tell him the truth, he learned that the dream was actually a judgment against him. No wonder Daniel was scared to inform the most powerful man on earth about the true meaning of his dream—Nebuchadnezzar was the tree!

On a positive note, the tree was a great provider for human and animal subjects alike, but the final outcome for the tree was far from happy. Like the tree, Nebuchad-

nezzar would be driven from the people and be forced to live with the animals, eating grass and being drenched with the dew of heaven. This would continue for seven years, until the king acknowledged that the Most High was sovereign over all the kingdoms of the earth.

“Return to me,
and I will return
to you,” says
the LORD Almighty.

Malachi 3:7

But Daniel did not stop at mere interpretation. He challenged the king, begging him to take his advice and do two things. First, renounce his sins and do what was right; second, be kind to the oppressed and turn away from his wickedness. If the

king did these things, his prosperity would continue.

People can and will turn back to God, whether they are leading intellectual figures, heads of companies, or rulers of major empires. We never know how God will use our words and actions to turn people back to Him.

Apply the Word

Do you have someone on your prayer list and you sometimes despair that he or she will turn to Jesus? Take heart from the story of Nebuchadnezzar. God delights in saving the most unlikely people in the most unlikely ways. Continue to be faithful in your prayers, and trust that God hears and works in ways that you might not see.

Pray with Us

Join us in prayer for the ministry of executive vice president and chief operating officer Steven Mogck. Pray that the Lord would guide and strengthen him in his important leadership role at Moody.

Pride: Faith in Self Comes Before a Fall

In the story of Icarus, his father created wings attached by wax in order to escape their unjust imprisonment by the king of Crete. When they reached Greece, his father landed and told his son to do the same. But Icarus, full of pride that he could fly like a bird, soared further away from earth, ignoring the wisdom of his father. The sun melted the wax, he lost his wings, and the young man fell to his death because of his pride.

Like Icarus, Nebuchadnezzar also rejected the good advice of one with wisdom. He continued in his prideful ways and paid a dear price. Thinking that he had created everything by his hand alone, he provoked God's righteous judgment.

According to the text, it was a whole year after his conversation with Daniel when he was walking on the roof of his palace, observing his kingdom, and pondering the work of his hands. At that moment,

before the words were out of his mouth, a voice from heaven stated the judgment that had been predicted in Daniel's interpretation.

Immediately Nebuchadnezzar was driven away from the people, ate grass like an ox, and was drenched with dew. His hair and nails grew like those of the animals. At the end of seven years, he raised his eyes toward heaven, and his sanity was restored. He then praised God Most High, declaring that "those who walk in pride he is able to humble" (v. 37).

Pride goes before
destruction, a
haughty spirit
before a fall.

Proverbs 16:18

While some might say the Lord was overly harsh with Nebuchadnezzar, He had given him an entire year to turn from his ways, repent, and give God the glory. Truly He is slow to anger and abounding in love! God's judgment had the purpose of turning Nebuchadnezzar from himself to Someone greater.

Apply the Word

C. S. Lewis noted in *Mere Christianity*, "As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking down you cannot see something that is above you." What do you need to do today to place God and others in their rightful place?

Pray with Us

Pray with us today for the staff of campus post office in Chicago: Anthony Harper, Michael Lathrop, and Jenny Matthews. They handle thousands of mail items every month, helping our students stay connected to families and friends.

Faithless Rule: The Connection between Idolatry and Leadership

When a missionary visited India, he observed the images and statues representing pagan gods that seemed to fill every corner. Overwhelmed by the idolatry, he asked an Indian Christian how he dealt with its ubiquity. The Indian man responded by describing how idolatry was so much worse in America, which is why he remained in India!

Idolatry exists in all places and in all cultures. In our passage today, Belshazzar placed other things in front of true worship. Instead of following in the footsteps of his ancestor Nebuchadnezzar and learning from his mistakes, Belshazzar held a huge feast complete with drinking, revelry, and his many wives and concubines. In the Old Testament, feasting that is not mandated by God is used as an example of the abuse of power. Instead of spending public funds for the benefit of all, these kings were spending the people's money on luxuries for themselves.

When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan.

Proverbs 29:2

Dictators in our day gorge themselves on the finest foods and luxuries of the day while their populations starve. Greed motivates some to manipulate the financial system for their own pleasure while millions lose their homes and savings. These are an abomination to the Lord. Not only was Belshazzar wasting the people's money, but he was doing it while using the gold goblets from the temple of the Lord!

Instead of praising God for the great things that He had provided, they were lifting up the so-called "gods" of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. From the most precious of metals to the most basic of building materials, they thought they had all of their bases covered, but they had ignored the One who made all of these items!

How quickly they forgot the lesson that God had taught Nebuchadnezzar.

Apply the Word

Wherever God has placed you, whether in your family, your church, your workplace, or simply your own free time, work with integrity. Don't allow the elusive pull of power to mislead you into placing anything before God's rightful place in your life. Our priorities should reflect our commitment to worshipping Christ.

Pray with Us

Continuing to focus our prayers on our campus post office, please add Victor Perez, Samuel Ramos, and Richard Tatina to your prayer list. May the Lord give them strength and bless their faithful service at Moody!

Faithful Witness: The Visible Hand of God

Scripture says that correction is needed to ensure that children are brought up in the fear of the Lord. When this does not take place, more painful judgment is in store. In the same way, God's hand goes out on those who need to be brought back, initially as a gentle rebuke and then more severely for those who do not learn (Prov. 3:12; Heb. 12:6). In our reading today, the hand of the Lord appeared quite literally and began writing a mysterious message on the wall so that He could not be easily ignored!

God's usually invisible actions were made manifest, and like His creation, were put on display for all to see. Belshazzar was so shocked by this that he appeared to go into a state of shock. Like Nebuchadnezzar before him, he offered great treasures for anyone who could interpret the message.

It is worth noting that Belshazzar had to summon the wise men of the kingdom since they were not among his thousand guests, which tells us something about the feast. When the king's wise men could not answer the riddle of the writing, Daniel's attributes and abilities were finally remembered by the queen mother.

Humble yourselves,
therefore, under
God's mighty hand,
that he may lift you
up in due time.

1 Peter 5:6

The king described Daniel's outstanding wisdom (v. 14), and offered him great wealth and prestige, including the third highest position in the kingdom (v. 16). But Daniel responded with a declaration that clearly revealed his opinion of Belshazzar and his ability—or in this case, his

idolatrous inability—to lead. Daniel was about to make manifest God's plan, one that Belshazzar should have avoided had he been brought up in the fear of the Lord. This lesson will be more fully unpacked tomorrow.

Apply the Word

Where have you seen God's hand in your life recently? How has He brought you back to Himself? Share this testimony with those around you, declaring God's goodness. Let your life be a positive example of the Lord's "writing on the wall" through your actions today. Who knows? Someone might hear His good deeds and turn back to Him!

Pray with Us

Would you pray for Dr. Thomas Shaw, vice president of Student Services and Enrollment? Our prayer is that the staff under his leadership would provide excellent service to our students and will always be there to help them.

Question and Answer

By Dr. Winfred Omar Neely, Professor of Pastoral Studies



We have a question about Genesis 4:16 and onward. Where did all these “other”

people, such as Cain’s wife, come from? We are getting all kinds of opinions and are now curious. If God created Adam, and then Eve, and then they had Cain and Abel, where did all these other people come from?



In answering this question, we must keep in mind the Holy Spirit’s method of narration, the stated facts, and the context. In the Old Testament narratives, God does not tell us every single detail. God’s purpose is to bring us into relationship with Him and change lives, not satisfy human curiosity. The Holy Spirit recounts the births of Cain and Abel (vv. 1–2a) and states their adult professions (v. 2b), but He says nothing about Cain and Abel’s childhood experiences.

We know that Cain, Abel, and Seth are the sons of Adam and Eve. We know that Adam and Eve had other sons and daughters (Gen. 5:4), but we know nothing else about them. Cain’s words in verse 14 imply that Adam and Eve had other children at this time.

Taking into consideration the context, the facts, and the Spirit’s method of narration, we must conclude that Cain’s wife was one of Adam and Eve’s female descendants. Cain’s wife was his sister, his niece, or a cousin.



I’ve heard, “The Land of Nod consisted of aliens from another planet, and there are

two species on earth—aliens and God’s people.” Please help with the truth.



The name *Nod* means “wandering.” The Lord told Cain that one of the consequences of murdering his brother was he would be a “restless wanderer on the earth” (Gen. 4:12). Cain, the wanderer, settles in the land of wandering. In the land of wandering Cain builds a city, and names the city after his son (Gen. 4:17). The people discussed in verses 17 through 24 are the descendants of Cain and his unnamed wife. Cain’s descendants developed a godless civilization. The Spirit traces Cain’s genealogical line up to the seventh generation. After taking us forward seven generations, the Spirit of God takes us back to a much earlier time in the life of Adam and Eve, closing Genesis 4 with the birth of Seth, the birth of Seth’s son, Enosh, and men calling on the Lord’s name (Gen. 4:25–26). Genesis 4 demonstrates that there are indeed two kinds of people on earth: those who call on the Lord’s name and those who do not!



In 2 Tim. 2:17–18, false teachers were saying that the resurrection has already occurred.

Were they denying the future bodily resurrection?

Continued on next page

A Yes, these false teachers were denying the future bodily resurrection of the followers of Christ. Many people thought about life in dualistic terms: the material and the physical are evil, and the spiritual and the invisible alone are good. Since the physical was considered evil, some people had a problem with the idea of a physical, bodily resurrection. Due to their dualistic understanding of the universe, these teachers claimed that our spiritual resurrection with Christ at conversion (Eph. 2:6; Col. 2:12, 3:1) was the resurrection of the future. They limited the resurrection to the spiritual, denying the Christian's future bodily resurrection.

Q **But does it really matter if resurrection is bodily or just spiritual?**

A It matters! The denial of the bodily resurrection is lethal to Christianity on a number of levels. First, implicit in that denial is a denial of the bodily resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:12). Second, without the bodily resurrection of Christ, Christianity implodes, leaving us without hope or a future (1 Cor. 15:13–19). Third, the denial is also an implicit denial of the Incarnation, which was literal and physical (John 1:14). Fourth, the denial implies that our embodied existence and the physical world do not matter. Fifth, the denial gives us no hope of a future embodied life. This denial is no light matter.

Our bodies matter to God, and one day because of the bodily resurrection of Jesus, our physical bodies will be raised and glorified, suited for glory forever (Phil. 3:20–21)!

Q **Matthew 27:52–53 seems to state that some bodily resurrections did occur at Jesus' death before He even went to the tomb. Are these people still around today?**

A On Good Friday the tombs were opened (v. 52), but it seems that these bodily resurrections occurred on the same day that Jesus was raised from among the dead, and they occurred after His resurrection (v. 53). We do not know who these resurrected saints are. We are told nothing of the nature of their bodies. Did they have resurrection bodies, no longer liable to death, or did they have bodies like Lazarus that were still subject to death, and consequently they died again? We are not told.

Here is another example of God not satisfying our curiosity. The point is that the work of Christ on the cross is stupendous and is the ground of the bodily resurrection of the saints who lived before or after His first coming.

Faithless Progeny: Forgetting the Lessons of Our Parents

During much of Europe's history, kingdoms were ruled by primogeniture, or rule of the firstborn, usually a son. It was thought that this would bring about stable governments and family wealth and experience would pass to future generations. Unfortunately, the sons of good kings often did not learn the lessons of their ancestors.

Belshazzar knew about the arrogance of Nebuchadnezzar and how he had treated the lives of others so trivially in deciding who would live and who would die or who would be exalted and who would be humbled. His pride led to his downfall, and he was eventually restored only after he acknowledged that God was sovereign over all the kingdoms of the earth. Belshazzar knew the stories, but he had not learned about the lessons of those who had gone before him.

History is not circular; Christians believe

it began in the Garden of Eden and will end when Jesus comes again to reign. But there are circular patterns, as people unfortunately make the same type of mistakes over and over again.

This account includes such a repetition in its introduction, but the conclusion takes a radically different path. While Nebuchadnezzar turned from his ways, Belshazzar arrogantly decided to glorify himself. He chose to eat, drink, and be merry—and his choice led to his death.

God is slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, but He also expects us to learn from the lessons of those who have gone before us, both their successes and their failures (Num. 14:18, Ps. 103:8). This is especially true for those in positions of power and influence who hold the lives of others, whether family, friends, organizations, or countries, in their hands.

Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

Proverbs 22:6

Apply the Word

Today is good time to pray for our leaders. You can bring the names of your local, state, and federal elected leaders to God in prayer, asking for them to have wisdom and humility. Leaders around the world also need our prayers. As we pray for political leaders, let us also ask for the Lord to graciously help us remember the example of others and choose to follow Him.

Pray with Us

As you pray, please mention our Computer Support staff: James Anderson, Richard McNeill, Steven Takushi, and Michael Paniak. We can always rely on their expertise to receive timely help with all computer updates and to resolve technical issues.

Faithful Doom: God’s Judgment Unleashed

In America, wealthier people are less likely to give to charity. One survey found that the wealthiest Americans give away just 1.3 percent of their incomes, but the poor give over double that, 3.2 percent, which proportionately costs them more of their limited resources.

The Babylonian kingdom was the most successful empire of its day, extracting tribute from other nations and reaping the financial windfall from their vast empire. The judgment written on the wall used monetary terms that would have been easily understood by all in the room, but their larger meaning was hidden.

Mene, tekel, and parsin are all accounting terms. *Mene* probably meant *mina*, a unit of money; *tekel* could refer to *weight* or *shekel*; and *peres* (the singular of *parsin*) is a verb indicating division, or half a mina or shekel. Considering that all of these terms revolve

around money, many commentators argue that the judgment about to befall Babylon was related to their spending habits, something clearly on display at the feast being put on in that moment.

Feasting was not bad in itself, and the Lord prescribed seven feasts for Israel, Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles. But those feasts were for all of the people, not just the select few at the top to enjoy at the expense of everyone else.

For the love of
money is a root of
all kinds of evil.

1 Timothy 6:10

Here was an example of the rich enjoying the “good life” and abusing their power, and the Lord’s righteous judgment called them to account at the very moment when they thought that all was well. The kingdom that had provided for their opulence was going to be pulled out from under them that very night; the party was about to be crashed by God’s mighty right hand.

Apply the Word

All of us—whether we consider ourselves wealthy, poor, or somewhere in the middle—can serve God through our generosity. Does your checkbook reflect your priorities? May we be known for our generosity and gracious sharing of our resources with those in need. May we not be like Belshazzar, pursuing our own pleasures at the expense of others and inviting the judgment of God.

Pray with Us

Please spend time in prayer for Moody Distance Learning headed by Dr. James Spencer, VP and Dean of Moody Distance Learning. MDL makes a Moody education available to ministry-minded people around the globe.

Faithful Conduct: To Be Found Without Fault

Weighing in at 273.85 carats, the Centenary Diamond is one of the largest diamonds in history. But more amazing than the size, the diamond is also internally and externally flawless, making it even more remarkable.

Finding a flawless diamond is hard, but how much harder is it to find a person without fault? Our passage today speaks to the amazing character of Daniel. Better than the Centenary Diamond, Daniel's character was faithful and reliable, one of the reasons that he was so powerfully used by God.

The Lord's desire for His people was for them to be pure and holy, set apart for His purposes. This is one reason why the priests, as the representatives of the people before God, had such high requirements for purity. The purity laws in Leviticus and Numbers were supposed to act

as a picture of the inner life of purity that the Lord required for His intercessors. This also explains why sacrifices were supposed to be pure and holy as well as the importance behind Christ's sinless, pure life as the ultimate sacrifice for our sins.

When Daniel was set up as one of the leaders of the kingdom under Darius, those around him tried to find fault in his affairs but could not, because "he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent" (v. 4). Notice how the text does not talk about his amazing mental abilities, or his political prowess, or his advanced degrees or business ac-

men. Rather, the elements that set Daniel apart were his faithfulness, lack of deception, and strong work ethic. To Daniel's credit, those who stood against him knew that they would have to find something against God, not Daniel, if they were going to bring him down.

Speak to the
entire assembly
of Israel and
say to them: "Be
holy because I,
the LORD your
God, am holy."

Leviticus 19:2

Apply the Word

We don't have to be the best according to the world's standards to be used powerfully by our Lord. God may give us superior intelligence or talent or abilities, but we all can be characterized by faithfulness, honesty, and fairness in our dealings. The wonderful thing about Daniel's amazing character is that it can describe us as well!

Pray with Us

Our Digital Media team—Adam Grandy, Christopher Burdick, Courtney Gaines, Levy Prukpitikul, and David Quigley—have prepared for Moody Radio's annual Share event that starts tomorrow. Pray for the success of this important fundraising effort.

Faithless Associates: Using the Law to Trap the Righteous

The legal definition of entrapment includes the idea that a person has been set up by law enforcement authorities to commit a crime that he or she otherwise would not have committed. Since 1932, in a U.S. Supreme Court ruling, the United States has recognized entrapment as a valid legal defense.

Daniel would have benefitted from legal protections like an entrapment defense. But instead, he and the rest of the Israelites in exile faced a law that went against the heart of God. Not able to find anything wrong with his character, the leaders set up King Darius as a pawn to snare Daniel. Instead of legal protections or representation to plead his case, Daniel was subjected to the machinery of an empire in which the king pronounced irrevocable decrees.

The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

Psalm 19:7

As leader, Darius should have known the stories of what happened with Belshazzar and Nebuchadnezzar and realized that there was a God who was the Supreme Ruler. The Lord had shown time and time again in previous kingdoms that He would not allow others to take His place as the one sovereign ruler of the world. Failing to seek wise counsel, Darius foolishly went along with the trap being set for Daniel and listened to their advice.

Daniel did not run away or cease praising God as was his custom three times a day. Rather, he continued with his established patterns, asking God for assistance. Just as they had hoped, those who were setting up Daniel for the fall found him continuing to be faithful. They finally trapped him! Or had they?

Apply the Word

Many believers all over the world suffer under unjust laws. Spend some time in prayer today for our brothers and sisters in Christ who could suffer if they profess the name of Jesus or gather with other believers to worship. Pray that God will give them the strength to be faithful, and pray that the governments who support unjust laws would relent and embrace justice.

Pray with Us

Greg Thornton, senior vice president of Media, invites you to keep Moody Radio in your prayers, especially this week with Share 2014 at Moody Radio Chicago and Radio Moody—Spanish radio station. Pray for God's blessing on Moody's global media ministry.

Faithful Creation: Even Vicious Creatures Are Faithful to God

Many people name large cats like lions, tigers, and panthers as their favorite animals. Unfortunately some have tried to domesticate these cats only to discover that a tiger is not an extra-large housecat. Sanctuaries have now been set up to rescue large cats who have been abandoned or mistreated when their owners discovered they could not be tamed.

A den of lions was supposed to enjoy a meal, compliments of Daniel when he refused to worship King Darius. But the Lord had different plans for His servant. While Darius seemingly did everything in his power to save Daniel before sundown, one wonders why he could not have simply made a new law that would trump the old one to work around the fact that the laws of the Medes and Persians could not be repealed.

The legal issues withstanding, this event was an opportunity for God's presence

to shine through His control over creation, even the mouths of hungry lions! Darius must have believed there was some hope for Daniel, as he was quick to rush out the next morning and ask if Daniel were still alive.

Maybe he did fear Daniel's God, or maybe he had heard and remembered the stories of Daniel and his people. At the lion's den, he learned that the Angel of the Lord had appeared and shut the mouths of the beasts.

While Daniel's willingness to stand against unjust laws put him in the lion's den, it was this same character that allowed him to be used by God for amazing purposes. As Daniel states, God shut the mouths of the beasts "because I was found innocent in his sight" (v. 22). Daniel's faithfulness was used to show God's faithful control over all creation, even the King of the Jungle!

May your God,
whom you serve
continually,
save you.

Daniel 6:16

Apply the Word

Are you or someone you know in an impossibly difficult situation, with little hope of surviving through it? Do not give up or despair. Our God is living and active, the same God who tames lions. He desires to bring us to wholeness in and through His Son. Pray that you would continue to faithfully serve Him and wait for His deliverance.

Pray with Us

As Share 2014 continues in Chicago, please include in your prayers Moody Radio's Programming team: Roy Patterson, Julie Roys, Brian Dahlen, and Robert Bersin. They thank God for all the lives changed by the ministry of Moody Radio.

Faithful Kings: God's Use of the Law to Convict the Guilty

The old saying tells children, “Be careful when you point at someone, because you have three fingers pointing back at you!”

Those in Darius' administration had not learned this lesson—their pointing to Daniel led to their own demise. In seeking to trap Daniel by making an unjust law and bringing the matter to the king, they hoped to convict Daniel for his religious observance. Instead of looking at their own lives, they wanted to find something to discredit Daniel. But by tricking the king, they made themselves detestable to him, and Darius wanted nothing more to do with them.

While their law was fulfilled to the letter so that Daniel was indeed thrown in the lion's den, they failed to take Daniel's God into account, always a bad calculation when you are dealing with the Creator of the heavens!

In an Old Testament preview to what God would do in an even more powerful way through Jesus, Daniel had been protected by God and was able to overcome the power of their law, raised from the potential den of death.

Similar to the administrators who accused Daniel, those who stand against Jesus and His people will face the same punishment as all law-breakers who are not covered by the Lord's Anointed. Not only did the leaders face bone-crushing death, but their families were thrown in as well, a sign of the de-

He is the living
God and he
endures forever; his
kingdom will not be
destroyed.

Daniel 6:26

pravity of their influence and the cost of their folly. As in the story of Esther (which also takes place during the Persian empire), the same law that they had hoped would “save” them led to their death, a testament to how the sovereign Lord can use temporal powers to bring about His eternal purposes.

Apply the Word

Have you been tempted to judge others? It's much easier to point out the sin of others than to submit ourselves to the guidance and conviction of the Holy Spirit. We can also forget that, unlike God, we do not know the content of someone else's heart and situation. Pray for God's help to resist the temptations of envy, gossip, and putting down others.

Pray with Us

Dr. John Jelinek, vice president and dean of Moody Theological Seminary, invites you to keep in your prayers MTS's faculty, students, and staff. Ask for God's wisdom and guidance for all the decisions in the seminary's global ministry.

Faithless “Beasts,” Faithful Son of Man

Before the year 2000 arrived, wild predictions about the end of the world were rampant, from apocalyptic fears to computer meltdowns to declarations about Christ’s return. All of these proved to be overstated at best and outright lies at worst. There is only One who knows the future!

The remainder of the book of Daniel includes prophetic visions that concerned times yet to come. While biblical scholars disagree about the precise timing and specifics of these visions, it is important for Christ-followers to know that what has been written is for our benefit, that we might be prepared, take hope, and have the courage to face what will come.

One cautionary note when examining prophecy is found in Jesus’s fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, because He did not conform to what was expected. As a result, many of the religious leaders of

the day did not recognize their own Messiah when He was standing in their midst because of their pre-conceived notions of how the Christ would come into the world.

This passage recounts the dream of the four great beasts. From Daniel’s perspective, they come across as terrifying! And

as these wicked creatures became increasingly less human, they also became more evil. Yet the most powerful imagery is not used to describe the beasts, but the Ancient of Days and the one like a Son of Man. They are set apart and described in a poetic stanza in verses 9 and 10.

The life I now live
in the body, I live
by faith in the
Son of God, who
loved me and gave
himself for me.

Galatians 2:20

The rulers of this world have sometimes used their power to destroy people through war, famine, and genocide. But they are nothing compared to the power, majesty, and ability of God. Unlike those of the beasts, the dominion of the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man will bring people of all nations and tribes to worship, truly a world that will be without end.

Apply the Word

In his book *The Weight of Glory* C. S. Lewis said, “There are no ordinary people. . . . it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.” We are all either becoming more like the beasts described in this passage, or more like the Son of Man. Who will you be more like today?

Pray with Us

Please continue to focus your prayers on Moody Theological Seminary, Chicago campus. Today, you can encourage its administrative staff, Randall Dattoli and Daniel Snoek, in their day-to-day responsibilities.

Faithful People of the Most High: Persecuted, but Inheritors

In a letter to the Roman governors in A.D. 197, Tertullian wrote that the “blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” This has encouraged believers suffering for their faith for centuries.

Daniel’s vision confirms that followers of God would continue to face persecution. Twice in the passage, Daniel comments on his distress. In verse 15 he says that the visions he witnessed disturbed him, and in verse 28 he was deeply troubled by his thoughts, so much so that his face turned pale.

The interpretation of the dream is given, with an emphasis on the fourth and most brutal beast or kingdom. This kingdom would be unlike those that had come before it, brutalizing the created order. From this kingdom would come a king who was bent on waging war against the holy people, taking his stand against God’s people until at last the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment.

Even in these dark days, God is still in control, even when the holy people are delivered into the hands of this great evil for a period of time. No matter how severe the time of testing, we are called to trust God.

We are . . .
perplexed, but
not in despair;
persecuted, but not
abandoned.

2 Corinthians 4:8–9

The Lord has provided numerous accounts of His people enduring hardship and then God redeeming their suffering: the Israelites in Egypt who were able to grow into a great nation and take the best of the land when they left; the early church which benefited from explosive

growth when persecuted; and even the crucifixion of Jesus, whose obedience to His Father was vindicated through His resurrection.

Sometimes God allows His people to face persecution. This passage reminds us that while there will be days of suffering ahead, God is still in control, and in the end, we will receive God’s kingdom fully and reign with Him forever.

Apply the Word

If you or someone you love is experiencing a time of suffering, let the truth of this word comfort you: God knows about your sorrow. He has not abandoned you. He is still faithful, and He can redeem this pain beyond what we can imagine. May you feel the peace and comfort of His presence in a renewed way today.

Pray with Us

Moody Theological Seminary has a campus in Plymouth, MI. Today, please pray for the Student Services department of MTS-MI: Christopher Brooks, Paul Wilson, and Nicole Johnson. May they share Christ’s love and be His light through their service.

Faithful Interpreter: Prophecies Beyond Understanding

The days after October 1929 were some of the darkest in America's economic history. The Great Depression was triggered by over-speculation and poor monetary policy. Many people would have loved to know these events were coming in order to prepare for them (or even profit from them), but most people simply had to deal with the fall out.

Through the prophet Daniel, God revealed cataclysmic changes that were coming. In our reading today, Daniel sees an overwhelming vision of kings and kingdoms rising and falling. Historically, it would make sense that the kings of Media and Persia are those of the Persian Empire (539–333 B.C.), dominated by the two "horns" of the Medes and the Persians. Charging after the Ram of the Persian Empire was the goat of Alexander the Great, the great general who spread Hellenistic culture from the Mediterranean all the way to India. While at the height of his power, he died of a fe-

ver, and his massive empire eventually divided into four kingdoms.

The "little horn" has historically referred to Antiochus IV Epiphanes (215–163 B.C.). He terrorized the Jews and set up an idol of Zeus in the temple, going so far as to sacrifice pigs on the altar. The Maccabean re-

volt against these practices resulted in the rededication of the temple around 165 B.C. As Daniel had seen in his vision, those who were powerful by the world's standards had all fallen, and those who were weak but faithful were still standing! These verses may also

foreshadow the coming of the Antichrist, whose reign of terror will set the stage for the Second Coming of Christ.

We can look back and see that God's faithful testimony to Daniel came about just as He said it would. While the prophecy was beyond understanding for Daniel, we can observe that the Lord was a faithful interpreter.

You, Lord, are
mighty, and
your faithfulness
surrounds you.

Psalm 89:8

Apply the Word

Does this history show you how Jesus is in control of the largest events recorded in ancient history? If He can control the whims of generals and rulers, how much more so can He direct the path of your life for His glory? Be encouraged that we serve the One True God who will bring about His purposes for our life.

Pray with Us

Would you cover in prayer the ministry of the Stewardship department headed by Jim Elliott, vice president of Stewardship? As its staff maintains constant connections with our donors and develops new ones, your prayer support is especially important for them.

Faithful Confession: The Prayers of the Righteous

George Mueller, a nineteenth-century evangelist, aided over 10,000 orphans and helped over 100,000 poor children receive a Christian education. He said, “Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man’s power ends.”

In our reading today, Daniel prays to God about the desolation of Jerusalem. While it is tempting to blame God when things go wrong, Daniel admits that as a people, Israel had sinned, turned away from God, and deserved the punishment that they received.

Looking back to the Word revealed to Jeremiah, Daniel realized that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. In response to this reality, Daniel did not wait around for the time to be completed or wallow in the punishment. Rather, he earnestly pleaded to the Lord through prayer,

petition, and fasting in sackcloth and ashes. Daniel radically changed his lifestyle, from what he ate to how he looked.

Daniel recalled the Law of Moses and how God had told the Israelites about the potential curses if they turned away from Him. He proclaimed that God was righteous in everything He did. Though God brought His people out of bondage, they continued to sin and do wrong, becoming an object of scorn. Daniel did not ask God to save them because they were worthy or because they deserved to be saved. Instead, Daniel called on God’s great mercy to forgive a people who bear His name.

We need to be like Daniel, confessing our individual and corporate sins and asking God to save us, not for what we have done but for what He has done; not for who we are, but for who we can be through Him.

Pray for
each other. . . .
The prayer of a
righteous person is
powerful
and effective.

James 5:16

Apply the Word

Kristian Stanfill’s song “Always” has some of the main truths of this passage: turning from self and sin and waiting on the Lord. “Oh, my God, He will not delay / My refuge and strength always / I will not fear, His promise is true / My God will come through, always, always.” Cry out to a God who is zealous to defend you, a person who bears His name.

Pray with Us

Digital technology opened immense possibilities for book publishing. Please pray for the Publishing teams—John Hinkley, Natalie Mills, and Duane Sherman—on Moody’s Chicago campus as they use new technology for God’s kingdom.

Faithful Time: God's Rule Over Days

In Madeleine L'Engle's book *A Wrinkle in Time*, three children travel through time to fight cosmic forces of evil. By tessering, or traveling through a wrinkle in time, they discover the power of love and God's light that overcomes the darkness.

God, the Creator and Sustainer, has power over time. In this passage, we see how God will bring about victory by overcoming wickedness and establishing a kingdom of righteousness.

Throughout Scripture, numbers contain more meaning than a mere mathematical notation. In our passage, the symbolic number seven is mentioned many times. This number represents perfection or completeness, beginning with God's creation in Genesis and continuing throughout Scripture to Revelation where it is used to describe both punishment doled out as well as the hope that those who overcome can expect (see the seven churches of Revelation 3 and 4).

Teach us to number
our days, that we
may gain a heart
of wisdom.

Psalm 90:12

Some theologians argue that this passage is one of the strongest messianic descriptions in the Old Testament. Gabriel tells Daniel about the "Anointed One" who would be put to death, and the people of the ruler would come to destroy the city and the sanctuary. We know that Jesus died in approximately A.D. 33, and that the temple and much of the city of Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, bringing an end to the sacrificial system.

Although some elements of this passage may seem obscure, it is clear that God has a timetable and will accomplish His good purpose for His people. Beyond the destruction and desolation described in these verses, there is a more powerful hand at work.

Daniel shared the Good News that through time, God would bring in everlasting righteousness, seal up vision and prophecy, and anoint the Most Holy Place (v. 24).

Apply the Word

Even if we don't know all the details of prophecy, we can still recognize the most important truth: God is faithfully in charge of time. If you'd like to study more about views on these prophecies, you can read the book *Daniel*, by John Walvoord, available from Moody Publishers.

Pray with Us

Continue praying for the Publishing teams and add these employees to your prayer list: Randall Payleitner, Zack Williamson, and Deborah Keiser. Ask God to encourage and inspire them as they market Moody Publishers products at the global marketplace.

Faith in the Battle: Hope in Times of Spiritual Struggle

When Leanne first began working in a ministry to urban children in impoverished neighborhoods in Philadelphia, she quickly found herself utterly exhausted physically, emotionally, and spiritually. “I thought I could just show up with love and good intentions. I had no idea about the toll of violence, abandonment, and poverty in the lives of these children. I realized that I needed vigilant prayer support in order to make it through from day to day. It was a spiritual battle.”

God is faithful; he
will not let you be
tempted beyond
what you
can bear.

1 Corinthians 10:13

In our passage today Daniel was overwhelmed by what he saw. The terror was so great that those who were with him fled and Daniel was left alone, deathly pale and helpless, eventually falling asleep on the ground. Coming face to face with an angel, as described in verses 4 through 6, was frightening!

Throughout Scripture, the first response of those who come into contact with

heavenly beings is usually one of fright and terror at the majesty, splendor, and awe of their presence. The angel usually has to comfort the witness, as he does here, touching Daniel and encouraging him to stand up. The angelic being describes a battle with the prince of the Persian kingdom who detained him for three weeks. At that point, Michael came to his aid and he was able to bring the message to Daniel.

As with many truths, there are two potential dangers when it comes to the reality of spiritual warfare. There are those who make every struggle a spiritual battle and give too much credit to evil, while others ignore the forces of evil, much to their own peril. Either extreme misses the importance of placing our trust in Christ and His power over Satan and death while acknowledging the reality of a spiritual battle that rages around us.

Apply the Word

We may not always have insight into the spiritual warfare around us, but we can always be faithful in prayer, especially for those who are serving the Lord in challenging places. If you or your church support missionaries or Christian workers, spend extra time in intercession for their strength, encouragement, and success in proclaiming the Word of God.

Pray with Us

Concluding our prayers for the Publishers teams, express gratitude to the Lord for Roslyn Jordan, James Hathaway, Rene Hanebutt, and Michelle Forrider. We are thankful for their commitment to spread the gospel through the printed word.

Faithful Provision: Peace and Strength in Hardship

The story of the first marathon describes how Pheidippides ran from the battle of Marathon to Athens to tell of the amazing victory of the Greeks over the larger Persian army. After his announcement, he fell down dead.

Daniel's encounter with God and His angels, which begins in chapter 10 and continues through the end of the book, takes a similarly exhausting toll on his body. At one point, he describes how he is so overwhelmed that he can hardly breathe (v. 17)! This theophany, a pre-incarnation appearance of God in human form, is to encourage Daniel in the midst of his hardship.

The language of encouragement is also seen in other times of great trial. Before the Israelites were charged to take possession of the land, both

Moses and Joshua commanded the Israelites over seven times to “be strong and courageous.” We see the same root word used four times in verses 19 and 20. When Scripture speaks of being strong, it does not mean for us to hit the weights or even to muster up mental or physical strength on our own. As this passage highlights, our strength is only found when we turn back to God, enabling Him to encourage us—literally to give us the courage to press on.

In the midst of the spiritual struggle around them, this messenger came to proclaim what is written in the Book of Truth. The Book of Truth included prophetic writings about what was to come, but its other purpose is to encourage Daniel and subsequent generations in times of trial. Our God has not, and will not, forsake us in times of hardship and strife.

This day is holy to
our Lord. Do not
grieve, for the joy
of the Lord is
your strength.

Nehemiah 8:10

Apply the Word

One way to develop spiritual “muscles” is memorizing and meditating on Scripture. You could choose Deuteronomy 31:6: “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” Other options might be Joshua 1:9 or Hebrews 13:5. Let God's Word be an encourager—giving you courage—today.

Pray with Us

Dr. Junias Venugopal, Provost and Dean of Education, requests the prayers of Moody's friends for further development of quality Christian education at Moody and thanks our faithful donors for making biblical education possible for our students.

Faithless Fighting: The Corrupting Influence of Power

Lord Acton, a nineteenth-century English historian and politician, wrote, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” For those in positions of power, this potentially corrupting influence can lead to the destruction of the lives of others as well.

For Daniel, power was something that he saw used against his people, both in his own days and in visions and dreams regarding days that were to come. Chapter 11 further explores the events of chapter 8, when the kings of the Persian

Empire are overcome by Alexander the Great. The kings of the north and south are remnants of Alexander’s empire, and probably refer to Syria and Egypt respectively. Their kings wage wars against each other until Antiochus IV appears on the scene, and he was most noted for his persecution of the Jews.

Do not be
overcome with evil;
but overcome evil
with good.

Romans 12:21

Antiochus IV attempted to divide the leaders of Jerusalem between those who supported Greek culture and those who sought to remain faithful to the Jewish way of life. Those who sided with him are known to have “violated the covenant,” setting the stage for the Maccabean revolt. A separate group of Jews left the

community of Jerusalem, forging their own community at Qumran, famous for the scrolls that were found in caves of the area in the twentieth century.

Daniel’s concern is not for the geopolitical issues of the day but for the people of God. Would they find safety during the turmoil that was going to be unleashed against them in the coming years? As Christians, we should see that those who have gone before us persevered. Like with them, God has a plan and will not leave us to the whims of those who seek power.

Apply the Word

Have you felt pressure from an “Antiochus” in your life? Maybe it’s a materialistic relative who teases you because you haven’t accumulated all the stuff of success. Maybe it’s a boss who wants you to cut corners to help the company get ahead. Maybe it’s a neighbor who pressures you to join in with ungodly entertainment. With God’s help, remain a faithful witness as a follower of Jesus.

Pray with Us

Join us in praying for Moody Radio South Florida, located in Boynton Beach, FL. Its staff—Audrey Altman, Rebecca Borgstrom, Jennifer Epperson, Eric Johnson, and Brigitte Sylvestre—are grateful to Moody Radio listeners for encouragement and support.

Faithless Self-Promotion: Standing Against the True King

The world defines success by the accolades we receive, the material goods we acquire, and by the powerful company we keep. Similar to the king listed in today's passage, people who live for self-promotion in this life do find success in these areas. Like so many in our world, they lash out at others, tearing down kingdoms and amassing wealth and power for themselves, believing that this will lead to their security and salvation. The god that they worship, just like all false gods worshiped in the past, is ultimately about themselves. They bow at the altar of materialism and sacrifice relationships and spiritual blessings in exchange for some stuff.

Any of us in North America can recognize the temptations of materialism, and its effects have spread across the world. When an African church leader was asked about the largest concern

that he had for his people, his response was materialism. When we become materially self-sufficient, it is easy to believe that we have provided for ourselves. We succumb to the lie that what we have is ours. When we do so we stand against the true King, failing to acknowledge our dependence on His provision.

There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.

Proverbs 14:12

The future date of wrath will certainly come, and in some ways is already present, as Jesus is currently reigning in heaven (John 5:25). We realize that all of man's actions outside of Christ

are meaningless, for they all end in destruction. As John the Baptist reminded us, the Messiah will burn up the chaff, all that is useless, with unquenchable fire (Luke 3:17). Like this king and all who stand with him, they will come to an end, and "no one will be there to help him" (v. 45).

Apply the Word

When people look at your life, do they see a sacrificial lover of Jesus, or a person who values stuff above spiritual growth? Material things need to be seen in their proper perspective: gifts from God to be used for His glory, not for our own status or validation. If you struggle with the allure of materialism, read the story of the rich ruler and Jesus (Luke 18:18–29).

Pray with Us

Please mention one more Moody Radio station during your time with God today. Deb Gustafson and John Johnson at Moody Radio Quad Cities work hard to encourage our listeners with biblical teaching and inspirational music.

Faithful Deliverance: Shining Like Stars in the Heavens

As we come to the end of the visions in the book, Daniel prophesies about the profound calamities as well as the amazing and beautiful events to come for God's people. The first verse of chapter 12 is one of the more disputed phrases in the entire book. What does the time of distress mean? Who has their names written in the book, and what type of deliverance is to be expected? Are these the ancient Jews who stood up against oppressors? Is this the church that will be in distress but will ultimately be delivered against the Antichrist or Satan? Does this refer to a future faithful Jewish remnant? Or could this refer to some combination of these?

Bible scholars continue to study and discuss the possible meanings of this time. Thankfully, God's Word has made perfectly clear that those who fol-

low God have everlasting life to look forward to (v. 2). This is the only time in the Old Testament that this phrase is used. And for those of us who have gained wisdom and led others to God's righteousness in Christ, we have the hope of shining like the stars in the heavens for ever and ever.

You may become
blameless and pure.
... Then you will
shine among them
like stars in the sky.

Philippians 2:15

When we can see the stars displayed in the night sky, we have a sense of wonder and awe. Our minds are hardly able to grasp the expanse of the universe; the innumerable stars and galaxies take our breath away. The God who made the heavens is making us into something

that is compared with their wonder. Paul repeats this idea in his letter to the Philippians: when we live good lives that are evidence of God's work in us, we stand out as beautiful beacons of hope in a broken world.

Apply the Word

Have you considered your life as an awesome example of God's beauty and love? You are one of His sparkling treasures! The Creator of the universe sent His Son to atone for your sins and bring you into relationship with Him. He has given His Spirit to live within you. No matter where you are, you can reflect the love of God in your life and shine like a star in the universe.

Pray with Us

Lawrence Carlin and Kevin Davis at Web Support work behind the scenes, but they make an important contribution to Moody's mission with their computer technology skills. They will appreciate our readers' prayers as they serve Christ at Moody.

Faithful Perseverance Until the End

Semper Fidelis, Latin for “Always Faithful” or “Always Loyal,” is the official motto adopted in 1883 for the United States Marine Corps, often shortened to “Semper Fi.” Marines are expected to live out their loyalty to the Corps and country, no matter what circumstance befalls them.

While the Marines might be examples of faithful determination, God’s perseverance for His people is even greater. As we conclude our examination of faithfulness in the book of Daniel, in our passage today the prophet wanted to know the final outcome for his people.

Daniel is told that many will be purified, or made right with God, but that the wicked will continue to be wicked, which is not much consolation after all of the destruction that Daniel had just witnessed in his visions from God. Using cryptic language, the messenger told Daniel that there

would be a number of days until the end, often understood as the length of time of the great Tribulation when God allows torment and plagues throughout the world.

Daniel is encouraged to go on his way and assured that in the end of the days he will rise to receive his allotted inheritance. These

words are also for us. Instead of being caught up in speculation and spending energy seeking to know exactly when and how Jesus will come back, we are called to be prepared. We should be found faithful, wise servants (Matt. 24:45).

Those who are wise
will understand.

Daniel 12:10

God’s faithfulness throughout time should be an encouragement for us to remain faithful. Our response to difficult days should not be despair or hopelessness. Throughout our study this month, we have seen God’s faithfulness to Daniel and Daniel’s faithful life in response, even in the midst of crushing oppression.

Apply the Word

Not one of us knows what tomorrow brings. We don’t know whether we will face sickness or health, poverty or wealth, encouragement or oppression. What we do know is that God will be there, faithful in His love and compassion and sovereign over all events. We can trust Him to transform us and all our circumstances into something beautiful for His glory.

Pray with Us

As we conclude our study of the book of Daniel this month, let us thank the Lord for His Word that searches our souls. Let us ask God to give us obedient hearts to follow Him all the days of our lives no matter what.

FROM THE EDITORS

Continued from page 4

attention, but I continued to treat You as if You didn't exist. When I was in middle school, You used to sit by me in science class, but instead of taking notes of photosynthesis like everybody else, You were taking notes on me. It amazes me how you saw the pain, despair, and hopelessness behind the "class clown" façade that I thought I had mastered. You saw what my fears were, what made me angry, and what made me cry. You saw what my dreams were, what made me happy, and what made me smile. You always had my best interests in mind, and You watched with a broken heart as I ignored all Your attempts of drawing near to me, and instead I headed down a one-way street named Kamikaze Boulevard. It devastated You to watch me start doing drugs and start stealing from my family, but You refused to give up on me.

As I grew older, I also grew bolder in the lifestyle I had chosen. Strongholds and addictions took hold of me. You started sending other people to me, hoping that maybe, just maybe, I would listen to them. But I was deceived; I thought I knew what was best for me. All I cared about was myself, and that might have been what hurt You the most.

It got to the point where everywhere I turned I saw You reaching out, trying to help me, but to no avail. My so-called "knowledge" puffed me up, and I looked on You with scorn, as if the help You offered was only a myth, or a cleverly devised fable. I was so smart I was dumb,

but every morning You had new compassion for me.

The years started to fly by, and my life became a cycle: when I wasn't in jail, I was high. When I wasn't high, it was a bad day. On bad days, I would steal to support my habit, and this would lead me back to jail.

Finally I decided to turn to You. After 7,462 days of not caring about anyone but myself, my selfish ways finally caught up with me. Everyone—who for the past 20 years and 5 months have put up with my disrespectful, disobedient, depressing, and destructive behavior—had finally had enough. Everyone, that is, except You.

I came to jail for the umpteenth time, and having no one to turn to, I began to sink, and I cried out, "Lord! Save me!" Immediately, You stretched out Your hand and caught me. And You whispered into my ear, "Peace be unto you. Be strong and of good courage, do not fear or be afraid; for I AM the One who goes with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you."

As the peace that passes understanding settled upon my heart, I began to weep over the loving-kindness, tender mercy, and amazing grace that You were showing me. As You forgave my numerous, wretched sins, and cast them one by one into the depths of the sea, I was able to truly breathe for the first time. A huge weight was lifted off my shoulders, and in its place an easy yoke and a light burden

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

settled. A yoke that would keep me lined up with Your Spirit, and a burden to run as far away from the old me as possible. I began to meditate upon my life, and I realized that even when I didn't know You, You knew me. Even when I hated You, You loved me. Even when I cursed You, You blessed me. Even when I blasphemed Your holy Name, You had mercy on me because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

It was You who allowed me to lose everything that I might gain You. It was You who gave me everything back that I lost, and then some. It was You, Lord God Almighty, and I thank You. It was You, Abba Father, who adopted me into Your wonderful

family. It was You, Lord Jesus, who laid down your life for me, that I might reign with You. It was You, Master, and I am forever indebted to You. I will never be able to pay You back, but I can try my best to live my life in a way that is pleasing to You, and this is what I desire to do.

It was You who showed me what true freedom is, even as I write You this letter from jail. It was You, Lord, and even with 10,000 tongues, it would still take a million years to express my appreciation for You. I love You, Lord, because it was You who showed me what true love is all about.

Your son, Wesley (Exodus 15:2)

Selah

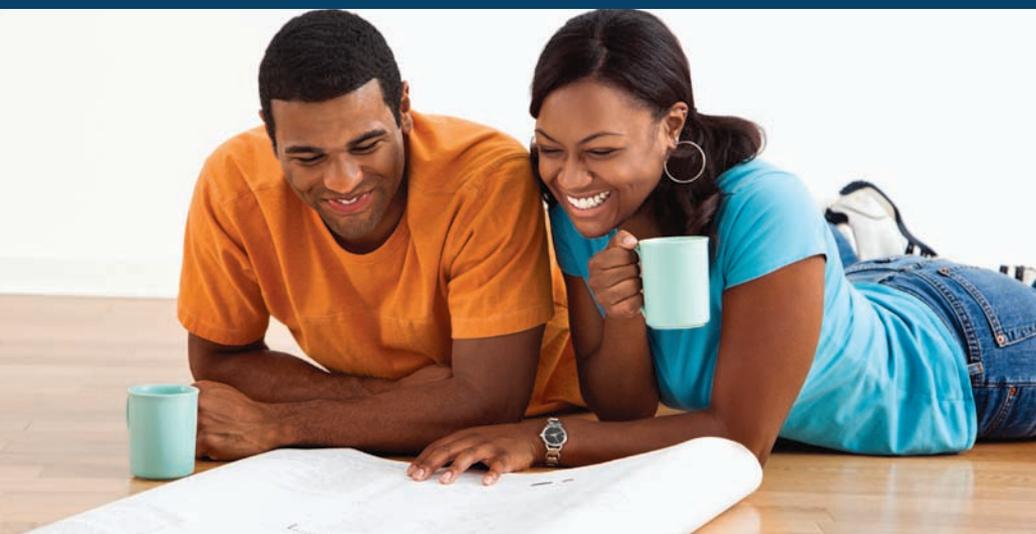
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