

January 28
Lesson 9 (NIV)

A STRONG FAITH

DEVOTIONAL READING: Revelation 1:9-18

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Daniel 10, 11

DANIEL 10:10-19

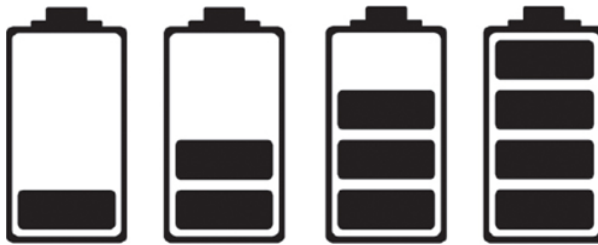
¹⁰ A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. ¹¹ He said, “Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you.” And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling.

¹² Then he continued, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. ¹³ But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. ¹⁴ Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come.”

¹⁵ While he was saying this to me, I bowed with my face toward the ground and was speechless. ¹⁶ Then one who looked like a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and began to speak. I said to the one standing before me, “I am overcome with anguish because of the vision, my lord, and I feel very weak. ¹⁷ How can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe.”

¹⁸ Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. ¹⁹ “Do not be afraid, you who are highly esteemed,” he said. “Peace! Be strong now; be strong.”

When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength.”



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KEY VERSE

“Do not be afraid, you who are highly esteemed,” he said. “Peace! Be strong now; be strong.” When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength.”—Daniel 10:19

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarize Daniel’s encounter with the heavenly messenger.
2. Explain the difference that faith in the Lord makes when facing an uncertain future.
3. Quote one or more Scripture passages that provide a personal sense of God’s presence and assurance during times when the future looks uncertain.

LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction

- A. What Are the Odds?
- B. Lesson Background

I. Faith Relieves Fear (DANIEL 10:10, 11)

- A. Touched by an Angel (v. 10)
- B. Commanded to Listen (v. 11)

Times of Trembling

II. Faith Welcomes the Future (DANIEL 10:12-14)

- A. God Reveals (v. 12)
- B. Powers Resist (vv. 13, 14)

III. Faith Receives Strength (DANIEL 10:15-19)

- A. No Strength Within (vv. 15-17)
- B. Strength from Above (vv. 18, 19)

Encouraging Message

Conclusion

- A. Bible Complacency
- B. Bible Cost
- C. Prayer
- D. Thought to Remember

Introduction

A. What Are the Odds?

The question above pops to mind when something unusual happens or when we consider taking a risk. For many situations, an actuary has already calculated the odds. For example, the odds of being hit by lightning in any given year is about 1 in 960,000. Those with a fear of flying may be relieved to know that the odds of a person dying in a plane crash are only 1 in 8,000. Nature lovers can be confident that the odds of dying from contact with a venomous plant or animal is about 1 in 42,000.

Some odds are comforting. But at other times circumstances of life cause us to feel as if the odds are stacked against us and we can't go on. Daniel's faith gave him strength in uncertain times for himself and for his nation.

B. Lesson Background

Last week's study covered Daniel's fervent prayer of repentance on behalf of himself, his captive people, and his homeland in Judah. The verses immediately following (Daniel 9:20-27) record a response to Daniel by the angel Gabriel while Daniel was praying. Gabriel said he had come to give Daniel understanding regarding what lay ahead for God's people. The prophecy of the seventy sevens follows. It includes descriptions of some of the Messiah's achievements, though persistent questions remain regarding how to interpret details of the prophecy.

Daniel 10:1 introduces a chronological note: "In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel." This was the year 537 or 536 BC, two or three years after the aforementioned prayer (see Daniel 9:1). The exact nature of the revelation to Daniel is not provided in the text, although verse 1 goes on to say that "its message was true and it concerned a great war." In addition, "the understanding of the message came to him in a vision." Whatever this consisted of, Daniel records a period of "three weeks" during which he mourned and suspended his daily routine of eating and grooming (Daniel 10:2, 3). We do not know the reason for Daniel's mourning.

Daniel 10:4 then describes a vision that Daniel had "on the bank of the great river, the Tigris" (compare Genesis 2:14). An unidentified but spectacular, powerful figure appeared to him. While the figure is not identified, some suggest he may be the angel Gabriel, in keeping with other visions (Daniel 8:16; 9:21). The men with Daniel on this occasion did not see the vision but fled in terror nonetheless (Daniel 10:7; compare Acts 9:7; 22:9).

The bewildered Daniel eventually fell into "a deep sleep" as the unidentified individual spoke (Daniel 10:9). This is the point at which our printed text begins.

I. Faith Relieves Fear

(DANIEL 10:10, 11)

A. Touched by an Angel (v. 10)

¹⁰. A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.

We do not know how long Daniel remains in his "deep sleep" with his "face to the ground" as the verse before this one describes (Daniel 10:9). Listening to a voice had led to the sleep, and now the touch of a hand results in the opposite. He awakens to the point of being on all fours (compare Revelation 1:17). We can compare this with what happens to the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 2:2. He is a contemporary of Daniel; Ezekiel's ministry is carried out among the captives in exile, whereas Daniel remains at the royal court in a more official capacity. We do not know whether the two men ever met.

B. Commanded to Listen (v. 11)

¹¹. He said, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you." And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling.

When a heavenly messenger appears to someone, a word of commendation may be spoken first (examples: Judges 6:11, 12; Luke 1:26-28). That happens here as well, and this is not the first time a heavenly messenger has called Daniel *highly esteemed* (see Daniel 9:21-23).

In order for Daniel to be able to *consider carefully the words* that will be spoken to him, he must be fully awake; that may be why he is directed to *stand up*. In other cases, such a command from a heavenly messenger is accompanied by a hint of disapproval or impatience (see Joshua 7:10; Jeremiah 1:17; Acts 12:6, 7; 22:14-16). That is not the case here (compare Ezekiel 1:28-2:2).

Even without hearing any words or tone of admonishment, Daniel is able to stand only with trembling. He also had been in a "deep sleep" earlier before standing, but at that time Gabriel touched him and set him in an upright position (Daniel 8:16-18). After Gabriel spoke to him then, he "was worn out . . . exhausted for several days" (8:27). Will the words he is about to hear have a similar effect? One can understand why Daniel is trembling at this point!

TIMES OF TREMBLING

A church group was traveling to a retreat. The driver, weary from the long hours, suddenly yelled, "Look, there is a refrigerator box breaking apart and flying in the air." A passenger said, "No, there's an accident ahead. It's a van."

The driver slammed on the brakes. Members of the church group were the first to reach the mangled van and a destroyed car, which had a family inside. The group quickly understood the situation, but felt inadequate to help due to lack of first-aid training. They didn't even have a bandage. Fear began to take hold.

One of the group reminded the others that “perfect love drives out fear” (1 John 4:18). Immediately everyone prayed for the strength to serve and love those in need. Fears were put aside in order to do what was necessary. Each began to meet the needs of the injured. One of the group flagged down an 18-wheeler, which happened to be driven by a trained emergency medical technician. The Lord had provided.

HOW TO SAY IT

Babylonian Bab-ih-low-nee-un.

Cyrus Sigh-russ.

Ephesians Ec-fee-zhunz.

Ezekiel Ee-zeeek-ee-ul or Ee-zeeek-yul.

Ezra Ez-ruh.

Gabriel Gay-bree-ul.

Jeremiah Jair-uh-my-uh.

Persia Per-zhuh.

Tigris Tie-grus.

As we encounter the unexpected situations of life, may our trust in the Lord help us put aside our fears so we can face our trials with courage. Daniel's God is our God. As God responded and strengthened Daniel, so also God will strengthen us for his tasks.

—V. S.

What Do You Think?

What steps can you take to ensure that your memory of God's love will be a source of strength during a difficult time?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

In times of physical suffering

In times of spiritual suffering

Other

II. Faith Welcomes the Future

(DANIEL 10:12-14)

A. God Reveals (v. 12)

12. Then he continued, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.”

Along with or in place of words of commendation, the words *do not be afraid* are sometimes spoken by a heavenly messenger to the recipient (examples: [Judges 6:23](#); [Luke 1:13, 30](#)). As this messenger speaks of *the first day* that Daniel set [his] mind to gain understanding, perhaps the reference is to the series of dreams and visions Daniel has been given. These go back to the beginning of [chapter 7](#), and each one recorded in [chapters 7 and 8](#) have caused him great distress ([Daniel 7:15, 28](#); [8:27](#)).

It is also possible that the messenger's words in the verse before us describe Daniel's response to the angel Gabriel's message in [Daniel 9:21-27](#). Daniel's act of chastening himself would then refer to his three-week period of mourning and his denying himself certain food and drink and portions of his daily care ([10:2, 3](#)). Daniel's prayer in [chapter 9](#) may be the words to which the messenger is now responding, or possibly the reference may be to prayers that Daniel offered during his three weeks of mourning.

Perhaps most important to note from this verse is the description of Daniel's spiritual condition: he has set his *mind* to understand God's ways. Seventy years of captivity in a foreign land have not affected the state of Daniel's mind or made him bitter toward God. He is as firmly committed to the Lord as when he and his friends had first set foot on Babylonian soil. What could be more important than humbling oneself before God as one works to understand his ways? Other passages, including [Ezra 8:21](#), also speak to the issue of self-humbling.

What Do You Think?

What are some ways we can help each other remain spiritually constant during hard times?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

When plans are frustrated

When weariness threatens

When doubts arise

When escapism tempts

B. Powers Resist (vv. 13, 14)

^{13a.} “But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days.

Since a heavenly messenger is speaking these words, one gets the impression that *the prince of the Persian kingdom* is a spiritual being who stands opposed to the work to be carried out through the Lord’s messengers. Thus he may be seen as representing Satan as he attempts to thwart God’s holy purposes. The New Testament uses the phrases “ruler of the kingdom of the air” ([Ephesians 2:2](#)) and “prince of this world” ([John 12:31](#); [14:30](#); [16:11](#)) to describe Satan.

This half-verse may therefore be describing the kind of spiritual warfare that Paul outlines in [Ephesians 6:10-18](#). It is noteworthy that the *twenty-one days* are equivalent to the three weeks of Daniel’s mourning ([Daniel 10:2](#)). The struggle pictured in the present verse is the reason for the delay in answering Daniel’s prayer.

^{13b.} “Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me,

Gabriel and Michael are angelic beings designated by name in Scripture (see also [Revelation 9:11](#)). Michael is mentioned also in [Daniel 10:21](#), where he is described as Daniel’s “prince,” and in [12:1](#) as the defender and deliverer of God’s people during a time of great trouble.

In the New Testament, Michael is called “the archangel” in [Jude 9](#), where he is described as “disputing with the devil about the body of Moses.” Michael and his angels fight and win a war in Heaven against the dragon (Satan) and his angels ([Revelation 12:7-9](#)). It appears that whenever Michael is mentioned in Scripture by name, he is engaged in some kind of intense conflict. So it is in the present verse.

We further note that Jesus’ return will be announced “with the voice of the archangel” ([1 Thessalonians 4:16](#)). We presume this archangel to be Michael, although his name is not used.

^{13c.} “because I was detained there with the king of Persia.

We can only speculate as to what this detainment involved. Perhaps it reflects the struggles that the exiles who have returned home are confronting in their efforts to rebuild the temple and reestablish themselves in their homeland ([Ezra 4:1-5](#)). Are satanic elements (referring to Satan’s use of various individuals or circumstances) at work to counter God’s plan for his people? Is that why Michael has been dispatched to help the messenger speaking with Daniel? We cannot be certain.

What Do You Think?

In what ways can acknowledging spiritual warfare affect how we endure hard times?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- Regarding our perspective on purpose
- Regarding our perspectives on friend and foe
- Regarding our perspective on resources
- Other

^{14.} “Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come.”

It’s one thing to know *what will happen*; but it’s another thing to know the timing, the *when* of it. What is being revealed to Daniel will not be fulfilled until *a time yet to come*. This most likely alludes to what Daniel is about to be told in [chapters 11 and 12](#) (not in today’s text).

III. Faith Receives Strength

([DANIEL 10:15-19](#))

A. No Strength Within ([vv. 15-17](#))

^{15.} While he was saying this to me, I bowed with my face toward the ground and was speechless.

Daniel’s reaction to what he hears is similar to his reaction to the earlier vision in [Daniel 10:9](#), although this time no “deep sleep” is recorded. One can understand his reaction. He has already been given an array of visions and dreams that have left him an emotional and physical wreck.

Daniel is an elderly man at this point; this may contribute to a lack of stamina for all of this. Yet here in [chapter 10](#), a heavenly messenger has thus far said, in essence, “But wait—there’s more!” No wonder Daniel can only turn his *face toward the ground* as he becomes *speechless*.

^{16.} Then one who looked like a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and began to speak. I said to the one standing before me, “I am overcome with anguish because of the vision, my lord, and I feel very weak.

Daniel is rescued when an individual with the appearance of *a man* (apparently another angelic being) comes on the scene. This is the fourth of five instances recorded of Daniel’s being touched by a heavenly being (compare [Daniel 8:18](#); [9:21](#); [10:10](#), [18](#)). The fact that this touch occurs on Daniel’s lips echoes [Isaiah 6:6, 7](#) and [Jeremiah 1:9](#). This enables Daniel to speak, whereupon he immediately confesses his extreme weakness. His use of the term *my lord* is not to be understood that he sees the one touching him as being deity. Rather, it is a polite term of respect for the being’s exalted status (compare [Daniel 1:10](#)).

What Do You Think?

Can [Daniel 8:18](#); [9:21](#); and [10:10](#), [16](#), [18](#) speak to the usefulness of human touch in counseling situations today? Why, or why not?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- Regarding potentially positive outcomes
- Regarding potentially negative outcomes

^{17.} How can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe.”

We get the impression that Daniel speaks these words while literally gasping for air. He remains more than a little unnerved by what he has been privileged to see and hear! But he is still aware of his status: he is merely a servant to the being with whom he converses. In acknowledging his weakness, it is as if Daniel is pleading for a second touch in order to obtain additional strength. And that is indeed what he receives (next verse).

B. Strength from Above (vv. 18, 19)

¹⁸. **Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength.**

Once more Daniel receives a strengthening touch. The *one who looked like a man* may be the same being who touched him earlier. Various passages speak of the spiritual hand of the Lord strengthening individuals (examples: [Ezra 7:28](#); [Nehemiah 2:18](#)). The verse before us, however, speaks of strength via physical touch from a heavenly being acting on God's authority.

¹⁹. **“Do not be afraid, you who are highly esteemed,” he said. “Peace! Be strong now; be strong.”**

When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength.”

Interestingly, Daniel's request for strength is not so that he might question the angelic being. Rather, Daniel has desired strength so that he might be able to listen, as evident in his request *Speak, my Lord*.

Part (most?) of the strength Daniel receives must be due to the reaffirmation that he is *highly esteemed* (compare [Daniel 10:11](#), above). Sometimes we too find ourselves in a state of needing calm assurance from the Lord that we are not alone, that he is still in control, and that he will supply whatever we lack. At other times we may find ourselves in a position of being the channel or conduit of the Lord's strength to someone who needs it. Such is the privilege of bearing one another's burdens ([Galatians 6:2](#)).

What Do You Think?

What has to happen to keep communication lines open with God in hard times?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

When we are tempted to quit (compare [Jeremiah 20:9](#))

When God seems distant and prayers go unanswered ([Lamentations 3:44](#))

When we are angry at God (compare [Jonah 4](#))

Other

ENCOURAGING MESSAGE

Eva, our church's eldest senior at nearly 100 years of age, struggles with physical weakness. But what she lacks in physical strength she makes up for in strong Christian love. Her wisdom and ability to share her Christian message knits the community together in love ([Colossians 2:2](#)). She is particularly good at alleviating the fears of mothers whose sons and daughters in the military are deployed.

When Faith's son Kevin was deployed to Iraq, Eva reminded her of when at age 2 he walked up to the choir, carrying a hymnal, to sing with them. “What a courageous toddler!” Eva exclaimed. They laughed and reminisced of the congregation's waiting each week thereafter to see the little one run up to join the choir. “We wouldn't have had it any other way,” Eva added.

“Faith,” Eva's encouragement continued, “you are the courageous mom who raised Kevin. We know God hears our prayers. He answered the first time you ever mentioned Kevin's courage in a prayer.”

We can be God's hands and feet in imitating this message of [Daniel 10](#). We can set others at ease, tell them what we appreciate about them, and give them assurance that their prayers are heard. Recipients of such a message can say, as Daniel did, that the Lord has strengthened them.

—V. S.

Conclusion

A. Bible Complacency

The availability of the Bible in the Western world today is mind-boggling. Just the sheer number of editions is impressive in an “embarrassment of riches” kind of way. For print editions, one can choose from various bindings, print size, color coding, etc. For electronic versions, Bibles are available for all the major software platforms in terms of “apps” (short for “applications”). These allow one to have the text ready to read within seconds on a smartphone or tablet. Anyone with such a device can have the Bible alongside them while they are walking, running, or working.

Such an availability of Scripture is indeed a blessing, but it can also produce some less-than-desirable attitudes. It is easy for us who live in Western democracies to become complacent and take for granted what we are privileged to possess. With that complacency can come a decline in the passion for spending time in the Bible. Technology, while providing ready access to the Bible, can result in less memorization of Scripture or of hiding the Word in one's heart ([Psalm 119:11](#)). The heart then becomes more vulnerable to being filled with unholy content.

B. Bible Cost

The cure for complacency is to remember and appreciate the high price that has been paid in order for us to have the access to the Bible that we do. We can read in church history of individuals who paid with their lives so that the Scriptures might be available to everyone.

The struggle to communicate God's Word traces back ultimately to individuals such as Daniel. His experience in today's text tells us something else about the process and struggle by which our Bible has come into being. His reception of God's Word through the visions and dreams that begin in [chapter 7](#) left him, an elderly man, nearly unable to function. He was not a passive, unresponsive instrument who robotically received whatever God wanted him to record. Knowledge of God's Word, which eventually became written Scripture, came at a price to Daniel.



Visual for Lesson 9. *Start a discussion by pointing to this visual as you ask learners how the imperative statement relates to the picture above it.*

Many of us who are reading this lesson material are doing so in comfortable surroundings—at home or in the room where our class or small group meets. If the weather outside is cold, our meeting place is probably well heated. We may be relaxing in a padded chair with a cup of coffee in front of us. We hardly think of “trembling” during our encounters with the Word of God—trembling that Daniel actually experienced.

Let us never forget the price that so many individuals, including the inspired authors of Scripture, paid so that we may have and read the Bible. May we, like Daniel, set our hearts to understand and humble ourselves before God so that his Word may accomplish all that he desires of us.

C. Prayer

Heavenly Father, forgive us for the times we take your Word for granted! May we be your instruments today to take the Word to those who lack it. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

D. Thought to Remember

Ministry success is a matter
of faith.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Enhance your lesson with NIV® Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at www.standardlesson.com or in the back of the NIV® Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

Into the Lesson

Prior to class, search online for videos about Team Hoyt and select one to talk about.

Begin by saying, “Rick Hoyt was born with cerebral palsy. He has spent his life in a wheelchair. At the age of 15, he asked his father if they could run a race together. Dick Hoyt was 36 years old and was not a runner, but he agreed. After that race, Rick told his dad, ‘When I’m running, it feels like I’m not handicapped.’ Since then, they’ve participated in more than 70 marathons and 6 Iron Man triathlons. They even ran and biked across the U.S. Today they are known as Team Hoyt.” Discuss the video you reviewed.

Alternative. Distribute pens and copies of the “Oddly Enough” activity from the reproducible page, which you can download. Have students complete the activity individually. Discuss responses and give correct answers.

After either activity say, “Sometimes circumstances cause us to feel as if the odds are stacked against us and we can’t go on. Daniel’s faith was a key element in having strength in uncertain times for him and for his nation.”

Into the Word

Write the following on separate slips of paper:

*a doting grandmother
a 5-year-old child
a football coach
an opera singer
a cowboy
a robot*

Fold the slips and put them in a bowl. Say, “Last week we studied one of Daniel’s prayers. Today we’ll see how Daniel found strength in prayer and from the angel sent by God to encourage him and answer his prayer.”

Divide students into three groups, assigning each group one of the following passages: [Daniel 10:10, 11](#); [10:12-14](#); [10:15-19](#). Say, “The angel appeared to Daniel to relay an important message. Each of these texts is part of that message.”

Let each group draw a slip of paper and convey the message from its assigned text in the voice of that person. (For example, for [verses 10](#) and [11](#), a football coach might say, “Daniel! Get your head in the game! Do you know how many people want to be in your shoes right now? I’ve got something important to say, and you’d better pay attention! Now stand up and listen up!”)

Have groups prepare their messages. Then read each Scripture text and allow the appropriate group to share its dramatized version. Afterward say, “We had some fun sharing the angel’s message from different perspectives. As silly as our attempts might seem, this message was a serious one—one Daniel and his people desperately needed to hear. Daniel needed not only the message, but also the strength to hear it.” (If time allows, you can have groups draw second strips and enact.)

Option. Divide students into two groups, providing paper and pencils. Ask one group to skim some of the Psalms and note specific verses relating to strength. Ask the other group to skim Isaiah and do the same thing. Allow students to work for several minutes and then read their selected verses to the rest of the class. Say, “Throughout history, Christians have depended on God to strengthen their faith. So can we!”

Into Life

Encourage students to talk about times in their lives when they’ve looked to God for strength. Then read the following verses and challenge them to choose one on which to meditate this week: [Isaiah 40:31](#); [Psalm 31:24](#); [Philippians 4:13](#).

Alternative. Distribute pens and copies of the “Give Me Strength” activity from the reproducible page. Have students complete the activity individually or in small groups.