

January 28 Lesson 9

A Strong Faith

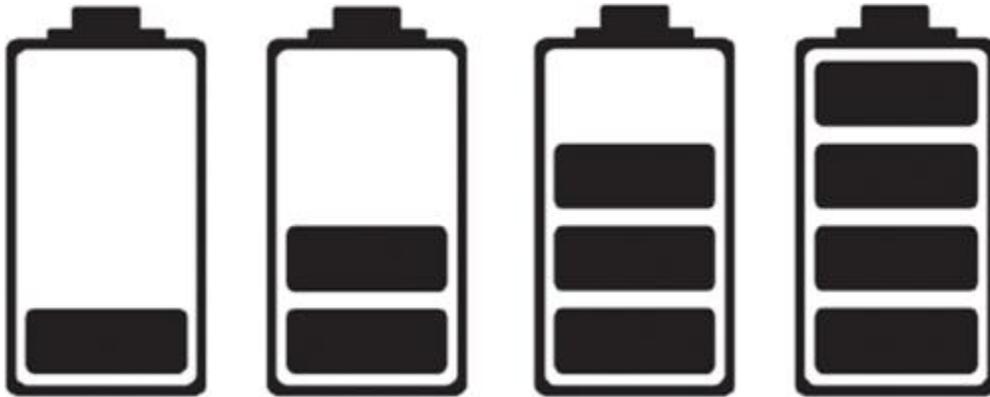
Devotional Reading: [Revelation 1:9-18](#)

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.”

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 OUTLINE

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

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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!

HOW TO SAY IT

Babylonian Bab-ih-low-nee-un.

Cyrus Sigh-russ.

Ephesians Ee-fee-zhunz.

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

Ezra Ez-ruh.

Gabriel Gay-bree-ul.

Jeremiah Jair-uh-my-uh.

Persia Per-zhuh.

Tigris Tie-grus.

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.

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.

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](#)).

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](#)).

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.

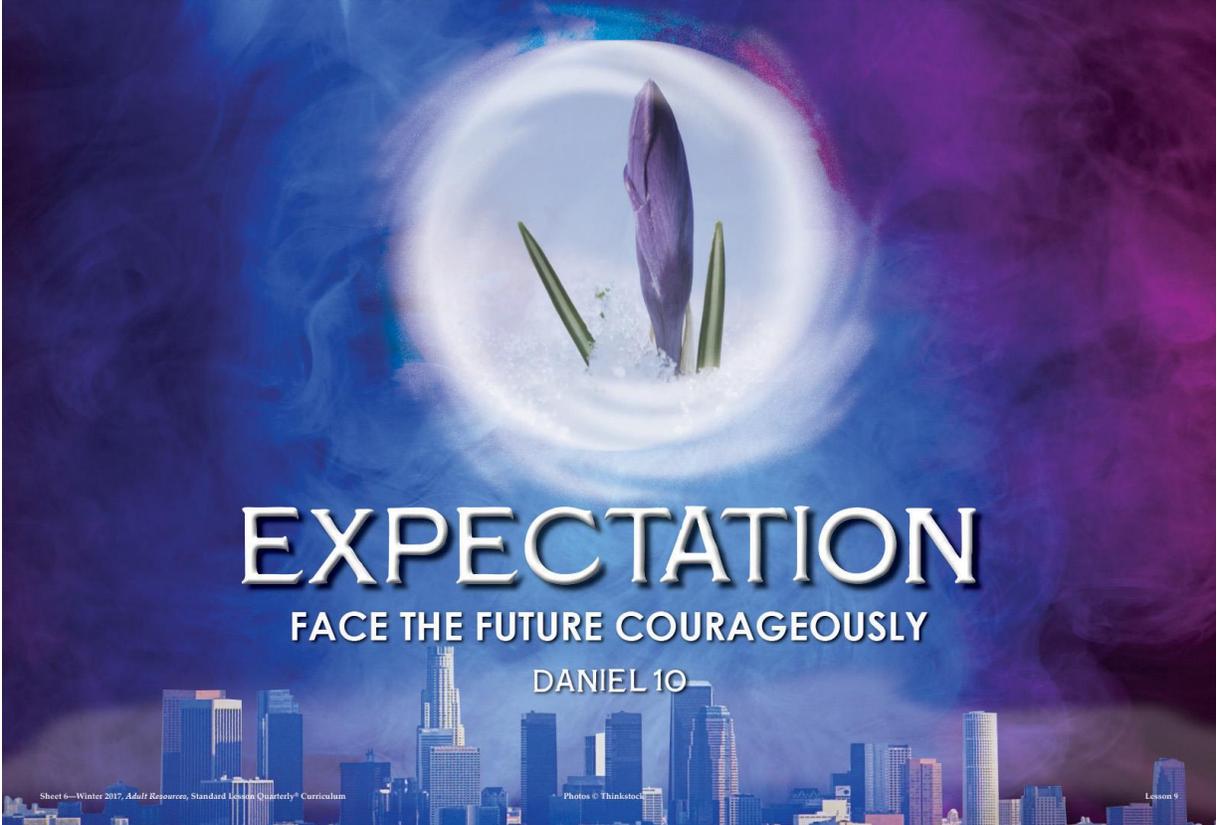
Such an availability of Scripture is indeed a blessing, but it can also produce some less-than-desirable attitudes. It is easy for us who live in Western democracies to become complacent and take for granted what we are privileged to possess. With that complacency can come a decline in the passion for 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.

BEING A PERSON OF FAITH IN A HOSTILE CULTURE



EXPECTATION

FACE THE FUTURE COURAGEOUSLY

DANIEL 10

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.