

Spiritual Battles

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[0 : 00] With that, I'm going to invite you to turn with me. You can turn in your worship guide or in your Bible or in your phone. No matter where you turn with me, remember that this is God's word. And God tells us that his word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold.

And it's sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb. And so that's why we read now Daniel 11, starting at verse 1. And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him.

And now I will show you the truth. Behold, three more kings shall arise in Persia, and a fourth shall be far richer than all of them. And when he has become strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece.

Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and do as he wills. And as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity, nor according to the authority with which he ruled.

For his kingdom shall be plucked up and go to others besides these. Verse 5. Then the king of the south shall be strong, but one of his princes shall be stronger than he, and shall rule, and his authority shall be a great authority.

[1 : 13] After some years they shall make an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement. But she shall not retain the strength of her arm, and he and his arm shall not endure.

But she shall be given up in her attendance, he who fathered her, and he who supported her in those times. Verse 7. Verse 10.

Something like it.

And after some years he shall come on with a great army and abundant supplies. He shall stand in the glorious land with destruction in his hand.

He shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and he shall bring terms of an agreement and perform them. He shall give him the daughter of women to destroy the kingdom, but it shall not be to his advantage.

[3 : 17] Afterward he shall turn his face to the coastlands and shall capture many of them, but a commander shall put an end to his insolence. Indeed, he shall turn his insolence back upon him. Then he shall turn his face back toward the fortresses of his own land, but he shall stumble and fall and shall not be found.

Verse 20. Then shall arise in his place one who shall send an exactor of tribute for the glory of the kingdom. But within a few days he shall be broken neither in anger nor in battle.

Verse 21. In his place shall arise a contemptible person to whom royal magistrate has not been given. He shall come in without warning and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. Armies shall be utterly swept away before him and broken, even the prince of the covenant.

And from that time an alliance is made with him, he shall act deceitfully, and he shall become strong with a small people. Without warning he shall come into the richest parts of the province, and he shall do what neither his fathers nor his father's fathers have done, scattering among them plunder, spoil, and goods.

He shall devise plans against strongholds, but only for a time. And he shall stir up his power and his heart against the king of the south with a great army. And the king of the south shall wage war with an exceedingly great and mighty army, but he shall not stand, for plots shall be devised against him.

[4 : 35] Even those who eat his food shall break him. His army shall be swept away, and many shall fall down slain. And as for the two kings, their hearts shall be bent on doing evil. They shall

speaking lies at the same table, but to no avail.

For the end is yet to be at the time appointed. And he shall return to his land with great wealth, but his heart shall be set against the holy covenant. And he shall work his will and return to his own land.

Verse 29. At the time appointed, he shall return and come into the south, but it shall not be this time as it was before. For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw, and shall turn back and be enraged, and take action against the holy covenant.

He shall turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant. Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.

He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant. But the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action. Verse 33. And the wise among the people shall make many understand, though for some days they shall stumble by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder. [5 : 46] When they stumble, they shall receive a little help, and many shall join themselves to them with flattery. And some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time.

Verse 36. And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the god of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished, for what is decreed shall be done.

He shall pay no attention to the god of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all.

He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these. A god whom his fathers did not know, he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. He shall deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god.

Those who acknowledge him he shall load with honor. He shall make them rulers over many, and shall divide the land for a price. Verse 40. At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack him, but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen and with many ships.

[6 : 59] And he shall come into countries, and shall overflow and pass through. He shall come into the glorious land, and tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand, Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites.

He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and silver, and all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Cushites shall follow in his train.

But news from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction. And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain.

Yet he shall come to his end with none to help him. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we thank you and praise you again that you have not left us alone as orphans in a merciless universe, but instead you speak to us clearly through your word.

And so we ask that you would speak to us this morning, that you would give us the words of encouragement that we need as we follow you in this broken and evil world. And we are grateful that we don't have to earn or deserve these things, but instead we simply ask them in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

[8 : 15] Amen. I know that some of you, maybe many of you, consider yourselves investors of some sort.

Maybe it's simply investment in a retirement account. Maybe you have some sort of mutual fund on the side. Even if you're not someone who invests, of course you see the news that happens right when markets go up and down.

People will tell you, oh, we're headed for a crash. Maybe a recession is coming near. There's going to be what's called a correction. And of course, these things are true for everyone, right? If the market goes down, everyone's affected by that at some level, but people have different ways of responding to it and reacting to it.

And so, for example, last year in February, March, we were under lockdown for the coronavirus. We saw the stock market crash, right, at some level. Now, the question is this.

If you see when you see the market crash, what is your response? There's a variety of responses, right? Some people see it as the time to sell. They are taken in by the fear of the moment. They think, well, I've lost money at this moment.

[9 : 19] I don't want to lose any more money, and so I'm going to sell before it keeps going down. Other people think of this as the time to buy. Stocks are at, there's a deal right now. I'm going to get in and invest as much as I can because I know it's going to go back up.

And some people simply hold on, right? And so there's the same situation for many people, different circumstances. And these different circumstances, in many ways, are affected by what your view is about history.

What do you believe about the history of the stock market? What do you believe that the future holds for you? It's your beliefs, it's your understanding of history that determines your response. Now, when all of these things were happening, PCA pastors across the country, we received these emails from the organization that handles PCA pastors' retirement, warning us not to overreact to market crashes, right?

You may see your retirement account dropping. Don't be panicked. So they sent us this first note that said this. The market rewards patience and resilience. As the following chart from the New York Times shows, stocks generally reward investors who look at their investment in terms of decades and not days.

[10 : 27] Look at their investments in terms of decades, not days. Mature investors often do things that are counterintuitive. When stocks slide, it's not time to sell them. Rather, it's an opportunity to purchase them at a discount.

And then in this letter, they provide this picture that shows what the stock market has looked like over history. And the point is to say, if you think about this in terms of decades, you'll have some perspective. You won't panic in the moment because you know this is just for a time.

It will not last forever. Brothers and sisters, as we come to this passage, the goal is to give us and Daniel an understanding of how history works.

That we would not think when we look at evil in the world in terms of days, but in terms of decades. We would understand the pattern of how things work in this world so that we could respond with wisdom rather than foolishness.

We can respond rather than react. And so that's what we're gonna see here. I'm gonna point out primarily three things to you. First of all, the pattern of history. Second of all, the control of history. And then our response to history.

[11 : 32] We're gonna look at the pattern of history, the control of history, and the response to history. Just as, if you're familiar with the markets, you know it's always going up and down, up and down, up and down, right?

You look at this graph that they give, there's times when things are less, there's times when things are more. The same is true of history. We see this pattern that there's a constant rise and fall of nations.

There is a constant ebb and flow to how geopolitics work. We see in verses two through four, a summary of things we've seen already in the book of Daniel, that there's the Persian empire that's going to lead to Alexander the Great.

Then we're gonna go beyond Alexander the Great, verse four. His kingdom, if you remember, it's broken into four pieces. And then in verses five through 20, we see the struggle and conflict between the king of the north and the king of the south.

The king of the south is coming from Egypt. The king of the north is coming from Syria. And this is the section through verse 21 where we see those rise words over and over. Okay, so my count is that of those I gave you, there's eight.

[12 : 36] However, I think I read two. I double-checked this, and then as I was reading, I read a second raise. So if you got nine, I don't fault you. But this word appears over and over again. Arise, raise, rise.

And the purpose, the reason, the reason it's showing up over and over again is to highlight this pattern. As soon as one king or kingdom is powerful, he falls and another takes over.

Alexander the Great, wow, he's so wonderful, dies at age 33. There's just this constant spin. You don't expect or know, you know no one's gonna stay in control and power for very long. There's gonna be this constant back and forth. We see this between the kingdoms of the north and the kingdom of the south. The author is telling us here, no sooner has one kingdom arisen than it's replaced by another.

That is the pattern of history. That's how things work. So remember, things get bad with the stock market. Often it's foolish to sell.

[13 : 36] We think in terms of days, in terms of decades. Things get bad in history. It is foolish to give up. We know from this passage, from the way the Bible talks about history, before too long, that wicked kingdom and ruler will fall.

In other words, as we watch the evil in this world, we know it is only for a time. God is constantly bringing down and raising up kings and kingdoms.

We have perspective. We understand how history works. And so I've mentioned to you before, I'm a book by a man named Chris Wright about the book of Daniel.

He points out that there's two errors that we can fall into if we don't understand the way history works. One error is to fear the rulers of this world too much. We forget they're just here for a moment.

God's gonna take them away. And so we shake in fear when we should in fact have confidence in God. The other temptation we can fall into other than fear is to love them and idolize them too much.

[14 : 43] To think that being close to the power centers of this world is going to be our key to success. We see this over and over from Christian leaders in the history of the church that there's something seductive about being close to the powerful.

There's something that's wonderful and alluring about having your picture taken with a president or a senator, right? These are things that people brag about. There's something that's just alluring about having your opinions published in a major publication.

And remember, wherever the power center is, wherever the power is, it will only be there for a time. Don't shake and tremble at the powers of this world.

Don't idolize them. Don't be drawn in by them. Be someone who's wise. Understand how history works. Know that as soon as one, they'll be replaced by another.

There is a futility, in other words, to history. Now, if you're not a Christian, I want to suggest to you that this actually makes much more sense of our world than the views of history that we're given in our culture.

[15 : 50] So there's, among many, this idea that we're on this road to progress. That somehow, generation after generation, generation, we're going to improve morally. We're going to transcend the people who came before us.

They were stupid and foolish. We, however, are wise and enlightened. Now, there is a sense in which history is moving forward. We have greater and greater technology.

The problem is that has not solved our moral problems. Now, I don't have time today. There's a book that recently came out by a man named Tim Keller called Hope in Times of Fear.

And he talks about this phenomenon in the very last chapter, in chapter 12. And he points out a few things, one of which is that technology has not helped us at all. In fact, if we look at the threats to the world, I think he lists five major threats to civilization.

Technology has made, I think, three or four of them much worse. And in fact, it's technology that allows things like pandemics to spread around the world very quickly. And so if you believe that we are going to improve as people morally, you are flying in the face of all the evidence and the facts.

[16 : 58] It's the Bible that actually gives us a realistic view of history. No matter how much things improve, the human heart still stays wicked and evil. And so our only hope is for salvation from outside of this world.

Our only hope is for someone not who can change technology, but who can change hearts. And so as we understand the pattern of history, history, we know it involves ups and downs. We're not taken in by one moment.

We're not taken in by one year or one event. We have a calm, a perspective. Just as an investor watches the stock market go up and down and they know, I'm thinking about this in terms of decades, we watch history and events and evil go up and down in the world and even as we might

grieve about it, we have a perspective on it.

We know how it works. Now there's another pattern that we're given here, not just the pattern of kings going up and down, but we see the pattern that in history we should expect and prepare for the persecution of God's people.

So this battle between the north and the south takes up verses 1 through 21 or so and then we turn to this new figure, verse 21, there's going to arise a contemptible person and we're told the details of this contemptible person verses 21 through 35.

[18:17] I'm not going to dive into the details here because of the link of this passage and the limits of our time this morning but I'll simply tell you verses 21 through 35 is telling us about the same figure we saw in Daniel chapter 8.

This is Antiochus IV who is someone who persecuted God's people. He brought intense persecution in the 2nd century BC and I'll give you the same quote that I gave you last time in Daniel chapter 8 from a man named David Chapman.

Antiochus IV who styled himself Epiphanes, God manifest, invaded Jerusalem, despoiled the temple, commanded the burning of the scriptures, forbade the covenant right of circumcision, put to death many faithful Jews and ultimately instituted pagan sacrifices in the Jerusalem temple.

In other words, Daniel is not just prepared for the pattern of history. He knows persecution is coming for God's people. This is something that is sure and definite in the future.

not only does it happen in the 2nd century but then we see this twist, this switch in verse 36. Up through verse 35 everything aligns with Antiochus IV.

[19:25] Verse 36 we begin to hear things about this king that don't line up at all with Antiochus IV or any other historical figure we can identify. And so many people believe, scholars believe what's being talked about here is a future, even future to us, persecutor of God's people.

So we switch from a historical figure that we know about to someone, it's a persecution that's going to happen in the future. And this type of persecution sounds like the kind of thing that's going to happen at the very end of the world.

In fact, we see that explicitly in verse 40, the very beginning, we're told this king is at the time of the end. And then in verse 45, however, so he's coming at the end, however, verse 45, he's going to come to an end.

So again, just like rulers and kingdoms in general, these persecutors who are after God and his people are going to come, they're going to be powerful, and then in a moment they'll be gone.

And so as Christians, we know, as we look at history then, it's not just that there's ups and downs that we keep the long term in mind, there is going to be persecution. We shouldn't be surprised by this.

[20:35] In fact, if we're in a time where we don't face persecution, we should know, oh, we're in a strange part of church history. Wow, this is not normal for Christians around the world or throughout history.

And so if we are the wise investor, we're going to take wise action, we know our job is this, we prepare for persecution. We're ready for it. We know that it's a normal, regular part of the Christian life.

We're students of church history and scripture. We see God's faithfulness to his people generation after generation, decade after decade. We know there are times and things that are hard and they only last for a time.

We've actually seen that in this series, right? Part of the reason we're studying Daniel is to know those things. We see God's faithfulness to Daniel. We're reminded Babylon was only powerful for a time.

We are reminded of God's faithfulness to us. Powers in this world will only rule for a time. The foolish action then would be overly frightened, overly scared of persecution, to abandon the faith.

[21:37] That would be like the person who sells as soon as things get bad, right? They sell their stock. What are we going to do if and when the stock of Christianity in this world falls? That's part of the warning here.

Do we sell it or do we take the long-term view? Do we think that we're looking at decades rather than days? Right? Great Depression of the 1930s.

Wow, it's really bad. Also, it's over. Stock market's recovered. Persecution, when it comes for God's people, yes, it's going to be really bad. Also, it's going to end. Things are going to recover.

So we understand and know history. We avoid the temptation to sell now, to give up on God and his church and his ways just because something's bad for a moment and for a time.

And so we're seeing here chapter 10. Again, we want to be wise people. We want to be people who know the pattern of history. We see here also, though, there's not just a pattern to history, there's also a control in history.

[22 : 40] The reason that these things operate in this way that's predictable that we understand is that we know that there is someone who is in charge of everything. Now, in previous chapters, when we've looked at prophecy, for example, chapter 7, I've told you, well, you know, there's lots of debate among scholars about what this means.

Some people think this. Some people think that. We come to chapter 8, especially when we look at verses 21 through 35, there is virtually no debate. The reason there's virtually no debate is because the actions given here are so precise and align perfectly with real historical events that have happened in the past.

So we know exactly what Daniel's being told about. Now, we could spend an hour going through all the debates and the details of it. If you want to see everything in this chapter and how it plays out in history, there's a variety of commentaries you can get.

One of them is called How to Read Daniel by a man named Tremper Longman. I'm going to give you one example. So chapter 11, look at me at verse 6. It tells us there's an alliance and the daughter of the king of the south, remember the king of the south's in Egypt, shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement.

But she shall not retain the strength of her arm and his arm shall not endure, but she shall be given up and her attendance. It's he who fathered her and he who supported her in those times.

[24 : 01] Well, this aligns perfectly with historical events that we know about. It turns out there was a marriage between the daughter of Ptolemy II in the south and the grandson of Seleucus in the north.

The grandson had an ex-wife who killed the daughter of Ptolemy and that's how this plays out. That's the level of precise detail that we have here in this passage. All these events here have this similar level of detail.

We're not going to go into all of them. The point is this though. God knows the future not just in general. He knows it in excruciating precision and detail.

It's not just that God is in control in this big picture, 40,000 feet sort of way. It's that God is in control in an on the ground, moment by moment, day by day sort of way.

God does not just know the future as well. He controls it. Remember, I pointed this out when we did our confession of faith. The word appointed shows up over and over again. Verse 27, verse 29, verse 35.

[25 : 02] Verse 36, we're told what is decreed shall be done. Well, who decreed it? God decrees it. And then, verse 45, remember, we're reading about this future persecutor.

He shall come to his end with none to help him. In other words, as we're looking for encouragement from God as we face times of evil, we're reminded of God's precision in his control.

God chose us to be the people at this church right now, this year, and last year. God chose us as the specific people that he wanted to walk through the coronavirus together at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church.

God chose you to be stationed at Fort Carson. He decided you wouldn't be stationed somewhere else in the country. That was God's decision. God decided that when I bought a house on Coolcrest, I was going to buy the green house and not the blue house.

Okay? It has a blue door. That's another story. We could go back to last week's illustration.

Remember the kids in the back of the car. It's not just that God is the one driving us and we know that we're safe because of it, but God has decided what road he's going to be on.

[26 : 12] He's decided what speed he's going to take it and he's decided where it's going. Elections and rulers are not outside of God's control. God specifically chose Joe Biden, John Southers, and Jared Polis to rule our city, state, and nation.

In some way, that's part of his grand plan. He's not surprised by it. He's using it for his purposes. God chose the kids that you have.

He assigned them to you. God chose your spouse. God is in control even over the smallest and tiniest details. We are meant to see this here like Daniel to be encouraged in terrible and difficult

and evil times.

When you face challenges and persecution in the world, you remember God chose for me to be in this situation at this time. And that means that he knew in advance he has given me everything I need to stay and stand strong.

We are able to be encouraged in the midst of evil because we know the pattern of history. We know that God is in absolute and complete control over history.

[27 : 25] And so his people can take hope and courage no matter what comes and no matter what happens. And we've seen here our encouragement, the way that God has given us a pattern and he's also given us his control.

There's not just a pattern and a control of history, we also see our response in history. And I've quoted this over and over again through this series and we're now at it. Verse 32, he shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.

Now this is talking about the persecution that happened in the second century. And there were some Jews during this persecution who abandoned the faith. Okay, so that's what it's talking about here in verse 32.

There's some that gave up Judaism. They are the ones who are seduced with flattery and violated the covenant. There's also those who despite the persecution of Antiochus IV remain strong and firm.

Those are the ones we're told here who knew their God that would stand firm and take action. And then we see some more ideas here verses 33 through 35.

[28 : 38] What are these people doing? We've talked about the wise investor. We also see the wisdom among God's people. Verse 33, the wise among the people shall make many understand. Though for some days they shall stumble by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder.

Some of the wise shall stumble so that they may be refined, purified, and made white until the time of the end. For it still awaits the appointed time. In other words, these people stood firm during a time of persecution because they knew God and they encouraged one another.

They made mistakes and failed at times. God used that to purify them and strengthen them. The point for us is this. We know God's faithfulness.

We know his faithfulness in terms of facts and history. We know his faithfulness here to Daniel in this book that we're studying together. That's part of how we grow in knowing our God. We know our God throughout church history after the scriptures were finished being written.

We can see his faithfulness to the church generation after generation, country after country, persecution after persecution. We know that God remains faithful and delivers his people.

[29 : 48] That is part of how we know our God so that we can stand firm. We know him not just in terms of facts and history though we also know our God relationally. Remember we talked prior in Daniel about the fact that prayer is what prepares us for what's ahead of us.

We are people who want to know God at a personal level. We see his answers to prayer over and over again throughout our lives so that when trouble comes we have confidence that he's in control. We look back to his faithfulness in the past and it allows us to know our God and stand firm in the present. Remember I talked when we were in Matthew chapter 21 many many years ago in 2017 I told you a story about a friend of mine dealing with unanswered prayer and I asked him how he stood strong in his faith and he told me this you use what you've seen in the dark or in the light to help you trust in the dark.

You use what you've seen in the light to help you trust in the dark. Brothers and sisters if we are going to be people who know our God we know God now and see his faithfulness in the light so that when the dark comes we trust him.

We are able to know our God to stand firm and take action. Now it's not just 32 but verse 33 the wise among the people shall make many understand.

[31 : 12] So we stand firm here not just by knowing our God but by doing it together. We've talked over and over about the fact that God does not just call us individually into a relationship with himself but he gives us his people the church that we would be able to remind one another of the truth.

It would be foolish for us to try to stand alone. But instead these wise people it's not just that they know God but they know each other. It's the same thing that we talked about at the end of 1 Peter

that there are people who are linking their arms together and singing one song so that they would be able to move forward no matter what is going on in the world.

And so I'll give you a couple more applications here of what it looks like to know our God so that we can stand firm. To be able to talk with one another verse 33 the wise among the people shall make many understand.

I'm going to give you a very simple and extremely boring application. One of the ways we prepare to stand firm is by being here together on Sunday morning.

This is the place where God grows his people in knowing him. This is the place where God grows his people in knowing each other.

[32 : 28] I want you to imagine for a second I know many of you take your firearms very seriously I want you to imagine someone who brags about the gun that they have for home defense.

Right? And you ask them well when was the last time you used it? I can't remember. Do you ever go to the range and practice? No not really. I just have it here.

Right? We do not rise to the occasion we fall to the level of our training. God has provided his worship with his people to prepare us and strengthen us for whatever is to come ahead.

And so be with his people. Make it a priority to be in worship. Make it a priority to worship God and hear from him in his word. That is how we grow in knowing him.

Now we've seen here that there's this pattern right? There's this control and I started out by telling you about the idea of investing that you want to make sure you're investing in things that are true and wise.

[33 : 34] You may remember when we were in the book of 1 Peter at the very beginning we were told about our inheritance. What it is that we invest in and I'm going to turn there now. This is what we see in our Lord Jesus.

We're told verse 3 blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

To an inheritance listen to this that is imperishable undefiled and unfading. Kept in heaven for you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In other words there is only one sure and true investment. It is the inheritance that has been earned for us by Jesus Christ and cannot be touched by anything in this world.

That's what it means here that it's imperishable undefiled and unfading. In other words the only good and true investment is this that we would follow after our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ knowing that he has secured for us something that cannot be changed or destroyed.

[34 : 45] he when he came and lived a perfect life on this earth the life we should have lived and when he died a death the death that we should have died to take our punishment for sin he at that time earned for us something that cannot be changed or shaken.

In other words we don't risk that for anything. No matter what comes no matter what happens no matter how evil things get we trust in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now the first letter that I read to you came at the end of February as the stock market was going up and down. Things continued to get worse and so we were sent pastors were sent this second letter in March we were told this it is very important that investors maintain their long term perspective during this very disappointing period.

We believe the market is being driven down by investors focused on short term strategies. Staying focused on our long term objectives is a winning strategy.

One of our board members works for a legendary investor who has famously said nervous energy is a great destroyer of wealth. We are in total agreement with this statement and would only add that the peace of God which has been given to us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is our constant hope.

[36 : 10] brothers and sisters how do we what do we do when we are discouraged when we're faced with fear and anger at the evil of the world around us.

As Christians we know it's very important that we maintain a long term perspective during this very disappointing period. We believe the world or faith is being threatened but in fact that's simply a short term strategy.

staying focused on our long term goals is a winning strategy. And in fact we can be reminded of the words of our Lord Jesus in Luke chapter 9 if anyone would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?

For whoever is ashamed of me and my words of him will the son of man be ashamed when he comes in his glory in the glory of the father and of the holy angels. Brothers and sisters the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.

[37 : 20] Let's pray. Our father in heaven we praise you and thank you for your word that you've given us to encourage us and we ask that we would grow in our knowledge of you that we would be able to stand firm no matter what.

We thank you for the encouragement you give us as we face the evil in the world around us and we ask that you'd continue to strengthen us no matter what comes. We ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.