

Daniel: A Ram, a Goat, and an Appointed End.

Daniel 8

MPS God reveals His glory by His sovereignty, and while Christ-followers will suffer, we glorify Jesus' Name by trusting Him as worthy for all people to worship Him.

OBJ Every person can trust God's sovereignty in suffering to strengthen their faith in Jesus' faithfulness by five reminders.

INTRO

READ Daniel 8:1-14

In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first. ²And I saw in the vision; and when I saw, I was in Susa the citadel, which is in the province of Elam. And I saw in the vision, and I was at the Ulai canal. ³I raised my eyes and saw, and behold, a ram standing on the bank of the canal. It had two horns, and both horns were high, but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. ⁴I saw the ram charging westward and northward and southward. No beast could stand before him, and there was no one who could rescue from his power. He did as he pleased and became great.

⁵As I was considering, behold, a male goat came from the west across the face of the whole earth, without touching the ground. And the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes. ⁶He came to the ram with the two horns, which I had seen standing on the bank of the canal, and he ran at him in his powerful wrath. ⁷I saw him come close to the ram, and he was enraged against him and struck the ram and broke his two horns. And the ram had no power to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled on him. And there was no one who could rescue the ram from his power. ⁸Then the goat became exceedingly great, but when he was strong, the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.

⁹Out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land. ¹⁰It grew great, even to the host of heaven. And some of the host and some of the stars it threw down to the ground and trampled on them. ¹¹It became great, even as great as the Prince of the host. And the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown. ¹²And a host will be given over to it together with the regular burnt offering because of transgression, and it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper. ¹³Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to the one who spoke, "For how long is the vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled underfoot?" ¹⁴And he said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state."

¹⁵When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it. And behold, there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. ¹⁶And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, and it called, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision." ¹⁷So he came near where I stood. And when he came, I was frightened and fell on my face. But he said to me, "Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end."

¹⁸And when he had spoken to me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face to the ground. But he touched me and made me stand up. ¹⁹He said, "Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation, for it refers to the appointed time of the end. ²⁰As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. ²¹And the goat is the king of Greece. And the great horn between his eyes is the first king. ²²As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power. ²³And at the latter end of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their limit, a king of bold face, one who understands riddles, shall arise. ²⁴His power shall be great—but not by his own power; and he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints. ²⁵By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall become great. Without warning he shall destroy many. And he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes, and he shall be broken—but by no human hand. ²⁶The vision of the evenings and the mornings that has been told is true, but seal up the vision, for it refers to many days from now."

²⁷And I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days. Then I rose and went about the king's business, but I was appalled by the vision and did not understand it.



[.1-9] **Daniel has another vision in the third year of Belshazzar's reign.** This vision is connected to the first but unique. The vision begins with Daniel being in Susa, the capital of Persia, where he sees a ram with two horns. The horns are very high, but one higher than the other. The ram charged in every direction, conquering anywhere it went, until it became great. Then a male goat came from the west across the whole earth, without ever touching the ground. The most ominous feature of the goat was the horn between his eyes. He struck the ram and broke his horns because the ram had no power to stand against him nor anyone to rescue him. We later learn(.20-21) that the ram is the Medo-Persian empire, and the goat the Greek empire. Commenting on the historical battle recorded in verse 7, Sinclair Ferguson writes, "Nothing could more eloquently summarize the overwhelming defeat Alexander visited upon the Persian forces in a battle at the Granicus River in 334 B.C. With only thirty-five thousand men, Alexander's forces plunged through the river attacking Darius's one hundred thousand footmen and ten thousand horsemen, reportedly killing twenty thousand at a loss of only one hundred Greek troops. Complete victory was assured at the battles of Issus the following year and at Guagamela in 331 B.C."¹ The goat became exceedingly great, until his horn was broken. In its place, four horns grew up, one each toward the four winds of heaven, denoting how the empire became fragmented from within by the new rulers. Then, from one emerges this little horn(.9), which Daniel tells us, grew exceedingly great in every direction, even to the "host of heaven", even to overcome some of the host and stars, and to desecrate God's holy place and offerings. This phrase tells us that this ruler came to believe and act as if he were God. This little horn will become the focus of Daniel's dream.² And though this dream is connected to the first, the little horn is not the same as the first but occurs in a different period of history. Scholars identify this little horn as Antiochus Epiphanes, of the Syrian empire.³ He became so powerful, and by desecrating the temple started a spiritual battle in the midst of his earthly conquering. Daniel hears a conversation between two holy ones, likely one who watches for heaven. The one asks, "how long?", and the answer comes back, "*For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful place.*" While there is debate on exactly how long this refers to, whether approximately three and a half years or just more than six years, the best understanding for this period of time is that it means "*the little horn does not defeat God's followers permanently.*", but "*symbolizes a reasonably brief period, not an exact number.*"⁴ And with that the vision is finished.

[.15-18] **Following the vision, Daniel seeks for greater understanding.** He sees one standing before him who has the appearance of a man. He then hears a man's voice that calls out to Gabriel to make him understand. He came near but this proved too much for Daniel, and he fell down on his face. The angel states that the vision is "*for the time of the end.*" Daniel falls back into a deep sleep, but the angel makes him stand up. What Daniel is about to see and hear will be greater insight into the second and third dynasties of the first dream's four empires.

[.19-26] The angel tells Daniel that what he is making known to him deals with the latter end of God's sentence on man's rebellion against him, of the trampling and decorating of His sanctuary. This "end" in mind is more of this particular period in history than the end of history, because we know another kingdom will arise after the Greeks. Here is where the angel tells Daniel that the horns of the ram represent Media and Persia, and the goat is the king of Greece. The four horns that arose in place of the broken one are four kingdoms from within the nation, or a divided nation. Toward the end of their reign, a king will emerge who will be bold and ruthless, powerful far beyond the other four, and cunning so that deceit will prosper under him. He will be a master of intrigue to mesmerize and deceive. And he will be arrogant to an extreme, such that he places himself in the place of God. He will destroy many. But while he puts himself against God, God will be the one who destroys him. Daniel is now seeing history approximately 400 years after his own life. Antiochus Epiphanes IV, who this speaks of

¹ Sinclair B. Ferguson and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, [Daniel](#), vol. 21, The Preacher's Commentary Series (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1988), 158.

² Sinclair B. Ferguson and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, [Daniel](#), 159. "The little horn not only takes a position of prominence; it becomes the centerpiece of the vision, and its activity is described in great detail. Clearly this little horn represents the climax of the revelation."

³ Sinclair B. Ferguson and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, [Daniel](#), 160. Ferguson notes, "One of the four horns (or divisions) of the Alexandrian Empire was that of Syria, which was governed by one of Alexander's generals, Seleucus Nicantor, progenitor of the Seleucid dynasty. Antiochus Epiphanes emerged within this dynasty bearing all the demonic characteristics of the little horn of Daniel's vision."

⁴ Paul R. House, [Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary](#), ed. David G. Firth, vol. 23, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2018), 142.



here, began to reign in 175 BC, and entered the temple in 169BC.⁵ His most vicious attack against the Jews was carried out after he was run out of Egypt by the Romans in 167BC, when “without warning” he attacked Jerusalem and erected an altar to Zeus in the Temple of the Jews.⁶ This did not last long as three years later the Jews rebelled, tore down the statute to Zeus, and rededicated the Temple. Antiochus died around 164BC, but not in Jerusalem. The angel concludes by telling Daniel that the vision of the evenings and mornings is true, but that is all for now and he should seal up the vision. Daniel speaks no more of what he saw and heard.

[.27] The vision left Daniel drained. He was overwhelmed by what he saw, and this caused him to be sick for days. Never underestimate the impact of glory revealed. Finally, he got up and went about the king’s business, but the vision continued with him, and left him appalled at all he had seen.

TRANS This is the heaviest chapter in the whole book, as we join Daniel in response to these words. Evil rulers are not new in this world. Every kingdom and every generation produces yet another with billowing ego shrouded in cunning deceit. Then, seeing other God-followers who suffer at the hands of evil rulers is hard, and having it revealed for the future in a dream leaves a lasting impact. But suffering at the hands of evil men who want to rule over others is as old as people. Cain killed Abel in a fit of raging anger because he was jealous and wanted to rule over him, but God called Him to account.⁷ Though we know God is sovereign and that He will make all things work out for the good of those who love Him⁸, it can still be hard to settle with the fact that suffering is part of faithfully following Jesus in this world. If this chapter reveals anything for us, as it did for Daniel, it reminds us that a war constantly rages in this world, that suffering is a real part of this world because there is an enemy who acts to harm and destroy people by any and all means available, but also that God remains sovereign even in our suffering. **So how do we make sense of Daniel 8 for today?**

Daniel 1-6 introduces us to Daniel and his friends, reveals the power of God’s sovereignty, and demonstrates His faithfulness to His people by His sovereignty at work for His people. When we come to Daniel 7 we begin to see that God’s sovereignty is not only for Daniel’s day or even only for our day, but we see God’s sovereignty over history, particularly over the rulers of this world. And though evil remains in this world now, one day it will remain no more.

The importance of understanding and trusting God’s sovereignty is significant when you consider that the biggest reason cited to not believe in God, for those who are far from Him, is the problem of evil in this world. They say, **“IF there is a God and IF He is good, then why does He allow all this bad stuff to happen?”** But God’s sovereignty is also significant for Christ-followers in this world, and a real challenge for so many who question why God would allow His people to suffer through trial and persecution. Suffering and the sovereignty of God have driven many to create false hopes that convolute or pervert the gospel. **The issue of evil and suffering in this world, and the preeminence of God’s sovereignty, remains a leading issue for both Christ-followers and non-believers alike.**

God reveals His glory by His sovereignty, and while Christ-followers will suffer, we glorify Jesus’ Name by trusting Him as worthy for all people to worship Him.

ILLUS We often say, “hindsight is 20/20, which is debatable in and of itself. Just because we walk through something and come to know the outcome that we recognize, does not mean that we see everything that comes from the event. Nevertheless, God sees far greater than 20/20 in any direction, for His view of all things is perfect. We often pray, “Lord, show us your will.”, particularly in the future or for our lives. Daniel reveals to us that very often, the kindest thing God can do is not show us because we simply are not wired to handle the reality of His sovereignty. What He does for us is reveals

⁵ Joyce G. Baldwin, [Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 23, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 178. “Baldwin writes, “It was in 175 BC that Antiochus IV began his infamous reign, and in 169 he first entered the temple”

⁶ Paul R. House, [Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary](#), ed. David G. Firth, vol. 23, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2018), 145. Paraphrasing from House citing Bengtson (1988:306).

⁷ Genesis 4:8,10-11

⁸ Romans 8:28



His sovereignty in real ways of in the lives of others so we can learn, know, and deepen our trust in Jesus, so when suffering comes to us, we have examples to draw from.

Q? How do we deepen our trust to strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ, so that when suffering comes, we remain faithful, and not shipwreck our faith?

OBJ Five Reminders that strengthen our faith by exhorting us in Jesus' faithfulness when we suffer.

1. Remember the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The God who came as the perfect, sacrificial lamb, who suffered without opening his mouth (to whine, complain, or post on Social Media), and willingly laid down His life to die our death, in our place, to pay our sin debt, who learned obedience by what He suffered, who showed us how He constantly turned to the Father for all things, but mostly to obey, He IS worthy of our faith at all times, and especially in hard times when suffering is imminent or ongoing. [Our Lord Jesus Christ suffered in our place on our behalf before God, so our suffering would not be eternal.](#)

When the Apostle Paul introduces the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23), he provides a potent example for us of how Jesus' introducing the elements was an act of remembering: "*For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed,*". First, Jesus entrusted Himself to the Father's sovereignty when facing his own suffering. We hear Him pray this shortly after in the Garden before His arrest. Second, Jesus gave us a means of remembrance, not only in receiving the elements of the Supper but in reminding us to always remember His sacrifice for us as the power and motivation for all our trust in Him. In this way, Jesus modeled our remembrance for us by His own participation with us. And by that participation, His disciples would recognize Him in His risen state. (Luke 24:31) When and where you sense other hopes rising within your spirit, to look to some other means of hope for you, to act in such a way to avert or avoid suffering for Jesus' Name, or to accommodate unfaithfulness in any manner, recognize this is a false hope that deceives and destroys. [The gospel declares that Christ died once for all. Therefore, we trust that we have died with Him so that we live for Him by faith.](#)

2. Remember: following Jesus includes suffering for Him.

The Bible makes clear that life of a Christ-follower holds an inherent understanding that we will suffer. We are not trying to develop some morbid approach or philosophy of life. But we recognize the spiritual war that rages in this world, that there is an Enemy who prowls like a lion to devour and is working through sinful pride to destroy. Those who say Christians are not going to suffer are woefully mistaken, deceived by a false hope. Not all Christians will suffer persecution in the same way, not to the same degree or extent, but God preserving His people does not dismiss Christians from suffering. [Christ-followers do not seek out suffering, but we do prepare for the reality of it, because faithfulness to Jesus makes us targets by His Enemy.](#)

Jesus teaches that a servant is not greater than his master, and that people will hate His followers because they hated Him. (John 13:16; 15:20) He instructs us to "count the cost" of following Him, not to consider whether we will or not, but to see the sum calculation that He is worthy of our suffering for Him, whatever it costs. For Jesus says, "*Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.*" (Luke 14:27) [Faithfulness to Jesus in suffering for Jesus is central to the life of the real Christ-follower.](#)

3. Remember: your suffering for Christ will end, but life with Jesus Christ is eternal.

If Daniel makes anything clear for us to trust regarding God's sovereignty, it is this: God cuts short our suffering to usher us into His glory. He may not cut it as "short" as you want, but you can know it doesn't last one second longer than necessary for His glory to be fully revealed. God has put a stop date on your suffering, as He has with all suffering. Whatever your suffering demands OF and FROM you will pale in comparison to what God provides FOR you and works IN you. Go to Hebrews 11 and you will find what many consider faith's Hall of Fame. But for each one, suffering was a central part of their life. And today they all testify of God's goodness, of His sufficiency in their suffering, and of His worthiness through it all.



And they testify from His heavenly throne, with Him, where they now reside for eternity! This is why James exhorts us to count every trial as joy. (James 1:2-4) [Trusting God's sovereignty means we know when the suffering ends, and it will end, the glory of God in and through our life has only begun and will never end.](#)

4. Remember: suffering shines a faithful testimony of Jesus' worthiness.

What we tell people when we suffer by faith cannot be said in any other way in life. When we have no reason to believe, no visible proof, no rational explanation, and no earthly reward awaiting us, people who see us must look for what lies beyond this world, where Jesus awaits to shine in glory and splendor! You can't know Jesus awaits you in the fiery furnace unless you walk in. People don't praise God because you say you are willing to suffer for Him. [The faithful testimony comes as we walk through the test and trial where God's glory rises from our full surrender to Him.](#)

Instead of worrying about your suffering, about what kind it may be, how severe it could be, how long it could last, or, worst of all, how you could avoid it all together, focus on being faithful to Jesus and seeing the sufficiency of His power manifested in your life whatever He ordains for you. Bear a faithful testimony to Jesus in your suffering by teaching your children that He is worthy of your obedience, no matter what it costs. (Then, they'll be the first to joyfully remind you when you want out.) Encourage one another with these words, even when we are not suffering. It helps keep life in perspective and multiplies gratitude when its good. Stand with those who are suffering when you are not suffering, to bear their burden with them. [Let us be a people who refuse to tell others about our suffering, and only testify to our glorious, sovereign Savior who is worthy!](#)

5. Remember: there is a whole host in heaven cheering for you. Hebrews 12:1-2

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. **Hebrews 12:1-2***

It matters when you know people are in your corner cheering for you! And the Bible reminds us, that they are NOT silent! The roar of Heaven declares Jesus is worthy! The whole host of heaven is roaring, "Jesus is worthy! Keep trusting! He's holding you. He will bring you through. What awaits you here is far more unimaginably greater than what is going on right now! Jesus is worthy."

ILLUS Francois Fenelon, a monk of the Middle Ages, stated, "The greatest thing is to suffer and not get discouraged." That seems like an impossible task, yet we know from the Bible and history that there were those who did this.

[God reveals His glory by His sovereignty, and while Christ-followers will suffer, we glorify Jesus' Name by trusting Him as worthy for all people to worship Him.](#)

CLOSE

