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## **DANIEL 9:1-3      FOOD FOR THE SOUL**

*<sup>1</sup> In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom— <sup>2</sup> in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. <sup>3</sup> So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.*

Jesus, exiled to the wilderness for 40 days, was famished. The devil came to him and tempted him to change the stones into bread. In reply, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3: “Man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). By doing so he not only counters Satan but reminds us of God’s discipline of his people in the wilderness. During the Exodus, the Hebrew people learned to be totally dependent upon God and his will as revealed through his word. In the Babylonian exile, Daniel has maintained a discipline of prayer to God, but we also see that he also sought to grow in his understanding through the study of Scripture. His visions and dreams give him insight into how God is interacting with his world, but it is the book that informs him about God, his will and his expectations for his people. Thus, it is God’s word that instigates the prophet’s prayer. It is a conversation. God speaks and Daniel responds.

Throughout much of the history of the western Church, the Bible was inaccessible to the people. They were dependent upon the institutional church and the clergy in order to be fed on the word of God. It was as if God had given a sack of manna to Moses and the Levites every morning in the wilderness which they then distributed to the people. One of the great results of the Protestant Reformation was the production and distribution of the Bible in the common language of the people. Likewise, one of the greatest inventions of humankind was the printing press by which Bibles could be rapidly (and ultimately, inexpensively) reproduced for the people. Accessibility to God’s word brought the people into conversation with God and reminded them that they were dependent upon God and not any human hierarchy.

Today, the translation of the Bible into the language of the people is still one of the greatest tools for the missionary enterprise. When we introduce another person to the Bible we are bringing that person into a conversation with God. We stand with them for a period of time and facilitate the conversation, as we would do in any worldly conversation. But our aim is always to be able to step out of the conversation and allow them to converse directly and personally with God.

The word replaced the personal experience of Temple worship for Daniel, we must not reverse the process and search for a personal experience that will replace the word of

God. God speaks to us through his word. If we truly want to know him and his will we must listen to what he is saying. Like Daniel, the reading of Scripture leads to questions and dilemmas, which in turn should stimulate us to respond to God in search of the answers. The experience of the Prophet reminds us that we experience God in our lives through the reading and study of his word.

**My God, I know that *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* May I search your word for you and find you to be the very food of my soul. Amen. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)**