

DANIEL'S LIFE OF PRAYER

Daniel 6:1-28

Key Verse: 6:10

"Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before."

These days there are many secular Christians who say, "I believe, so it's okay." They are greatly mistaken. Faith requires spiritual fighting through prayer. In addition, faith requires obedience and loyalty to God. Daniel chapter 6 is a story about Daniel's life of prayer. Because of his life of prayer, Daniel was thrown into the den of lions. But God protected him with his angels from the harm of lions.

I. Daniel's prayer (1-10)

First, political rivals' conspiracy (1-9). After conquering the great Babylonian Empire, King Darius stood out to be the ruler of the superpower nation. King Darius divided his kingdom into 120 states and appointed 120 satraps as vassal kings; they were equivalent to governors of our time. Over them King Darius placed three prime ministers. The three prime ministers were in charge of the 120 governors. King Darius established a system of totalitarian empire. Also, King Darius, who had keen insight to scout the talented, chose Daniel to be one of his prime ministers.

Daniel was a POW from Judah. But he was a man of God's wisdom and intelligence and understanding. Daniel was also a man of integrity. When he served King Nebuchadnezzar he showed no love of money or political ambition. He only worked hard with sincerity and loyalty for the king. To the king's eyes, Daniel was so distinguished among the prime ministers by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. In this way, Daniel became the first prime minister. At this, the other two prime ministers and the governors became jealous of Daniel (4). They got together to deliberate in a conference to conspire against Daniel, in order to pull him down from his position. When they tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, they were unable to do so. If we beat something the dust will come out. Likewise, when people dig into a person's life in every possible way, they can find many faults and mistakes. Still, they could find neither corruption nor negligence in Daniel (4). Daniel was faultless, flawless and matchless. Finally they said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God" (5).

Then the two prime ministers and the governors went as a group to

the king and said: "O King Darius, live forever!" They kept on saying, "The king should issue an edict and enforce a decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next 30 days, except you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den" (7). This was a terrible conspiracy. But the king's wisdom was too limited to figure out their conspiracy. Rather the king was pleased to hear them say this, because he was inspired to make use of their petitions to strengthen the unity of 120 states and culminate his sovereignty and glory. So the king agreed with their petitions and issued a decree and put it in writing so that it could not be altered or replaced--in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians (8).

Second, Daniel's prayer (10). What did Daniel do in this situation? Look at verse 10. "Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened towards Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before." Daniel knew that he was in deep trouble. So he had to figure out how to survive. In this case, most smart and able people try to figure out the way of survival with their smart mind. Daniel was an extraordinary, outstanding person. So he could have tried in his own way to get out of the situation. But he did not do so. He depended on God in prayer. Now he had to decide to give up his ruling position so that he might stand on the side of God.

Daniel was also a human being. So he was afraid as a POW. But there was a way to overcome the situation: It was his prayer. Daniel knew unbearable disaster would fall upon him if he did not give up his life of prayer at this point. But he decided to depend on God in prayer, risking his life. We have studied the characteristics of his faith. He was a man of uncompromising faith. When Daniel was chosen to be a Ph.D. candidate at the royal academy of the Babylonian Empire, he decided not to be contaminated by the Babylonian culture. So he resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine (1:8). Once, Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a tree. The dream predicted the destiny of the king and his kingdom. Daniel had a chance to rise to power. But he kept his heart as a servant of God and rebuked the king, saying, "Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue" (4:27). Daniel also rebuked King Belshazzar's party animal life (5:22). Daniel did not compromise his faith before the possibility of being thrown into the den of lions and lionesses. Daniel could have prayed, covering himself with a thick blanket or in the closet. But he did not do so. He opened the window and prayed three times a day, even though he knew his rivals were watching over him. Usually people tremble in fear at the time of crisis. But Daniel knelt down to pray. At that time, Daniel was around 90 years old. But he was not overconfident about his faith. He prayed earnestly and humbly depending on God Almighty. Prayer was the source of his strength. Daniel prayed when he confronted the crucial moment.

Prayer is the measure of faith. But these days the meaning of prayer has become very vague. Many people say, "I pray." But actually, they don't pray but waste time in daydreams or vague anxiety or meditation, pretending to pray. Here we learn we must depend on God in prayer at the time of crisis. We see many examples of this in the Bible. According to God's promises, Abraham left his home and set out for the land of Canaan. At that time, Abraham might have thought that the promised land was a paradise. But when he arrived, to his surprise, Canaan was full of macho men and women who looked wild and violent. Abraham was caught by fear. He was helpless. But he did not doubt God. In that situation, Abraham depended on God Almighty in prayer. Genesis 12:8b says, "There he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord." This verse indicates that he thanked God and honored God in prayer.

Moses is another example of this. Moses worked for God for 40 years. He suffered endlessly to deliver 600,000 Israelites from the yoke of slavery and to lead them to the promised land. Moses really wanted to step into the promised land flowing with milk and honey. But God told Moses that he would die before entering the promised land because he had not honored God as holy before the eyes of his people when he hit the rock twice in his anger (Nu 20:11). Moses had worked hard for God. But he was to be discharged from his mission with dishonor (Nu 27:12-14). But Moses was not upset. He was not withdrawn into himself. He thought of his people and prayed that God would give them a shepherd in his place. Numbers 27:15-17 says: "Moses said to the Lord, 'May the Lord, the God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd.'"

When we see Jesus, we can learn the character of prayer. Jesus prayed early in the morning. Mark 1:35 says, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." This verse indicates that prayer is the time of listening to God, not a time of making many requests and demands and impositions.

Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane. Luke 22:42 says, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." This verse indicates prayer is the time of decision to obey his will. Jesus also prayed on the cross. Luke 23:34a says, "Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.'" This verse indicates that prayer is asking God's mercy for his children. Prayer should not be selfish. Prayer has to be intercessory. Daniel is famous in many ways. But he is famous mostly because three times a day, he got down on his knees and prayed. When we remember Daniel, we remember that Daniel was a man of prayer who prayed three times a day.

II. Daniel's life testimony (11-28)

First, King Darius' sorry feeling for Daniel (11-20). When his political rivals found Daniel praying and asking God for help at his house, they went to the king and reminded him of his royal decree, saying, "Daniel, one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, nor to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day." When the king heard this he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him (12-14).

The political opponents waited and waited for the king's order to throw Daniel into the den of lions. But the king was very hesitant until sundown. Then they pressed the king by saying, "Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed" (15). The king gave in to them and gave the order. And they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. King Darius rose to be the most powerful king of the superpower nation. In order to be the top ruler of many nations, he had to be cruel and relentless. He thought of one man's life as that of a fly or bits of straw. Even though Darius was a king, and ruler of a totalitarian empire, we can see that he liked a man of integrity and a man of God. And he did all his best to rescue Daniel from the den of lions. But King Darius was trapped by his own law and was pressed by his advisors. So he prayed that Daniel's God, whom Daniel served, would rescue him (16).

Now Daniel was thrown into the den of lions. Then his political opponents brought a big stone and placed it over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed (17). Daniel's political opponents thought his bones were crushed by hungry lions. They assumed that they won the victory. They were sadistic. But the king was different. The king was suffering from a thorn of conscience. He returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep. Historically, most kings had drinking parties and various kinds of entertainment during the nighttime in order to forget about the things of the world. In truth, they drank, not to please themselves, but to get some sleep. Probably most kings were drunkards. But King Darius could not sleep because he was pricked by a thorn of conscience. He was greatly distressed that he could not rescue a man of God, Daniel.

At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?" Daniel answered, "O King, live forever. My God sent his angel and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me because I was found innocent in his sight, nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king." This is

Daniel's life testimony. In his life testimony, he says God sent his angel and protected him from the mouths of the lions and they did not hurt him. The lions were very hungry. They wanted to eat him up. But they could not do so because the angel of God shut their mouths and took all the strength away from their bodies. Also the angel of God gave them beautiful smiles. Daniel made friends with the gorgeous lions and smiling lionesses. When they slept, Daniel also slept. In the early morning, the king approached and called out to him in an anguished voice, "Daniel, are you okay?" "Yes, Majesty," answered Daniel.

St. Paul was on the way to Rome by ship, shackled. He advised the centurion not to sail during the wintertime. The centurion did not listen to Paul, but to the captain of the ship. One night, they were shipwrecked and everyone was supposed to be lost at sea. But the angel of God came to rescue Paul. So the Roman soldiers and sailors and prisoners were also saved because of Paul (Ac 27:22). When we trust and obey, God protects us through his angel wherever we go. When we trust and obey, we acknowledge that God is present with us to protect us through his angels. When we pray like Daniel and depend on him in prayer absolutely, we can even see the angel of God with our own eyes. St. John was in the Isle of Patmos. He was in a cave dungeon. Literally speaking, he was in hell. But John prayed continually for God's kingdom to come. Then he saw the angels of God surround him. He also saw the kingdom of God (Rev 21).

As soon as the king heard Daniel's life testimony, he was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. We learn from Daniel how to trust in God. We have to trust in God 100%. If we trust in God 99.9%, then we will be eaten by the lions and lionesses. When we trust in God we must trust in him 100%. This tells us that faith should be perfect even if it is as small as a mustard seed. Otherwise, it is not faith at all.

Second, the enemies of God perish (21-28). What happened to the political opponents of Daniel? The king had been pressed by Daniel's political opponents and had done what he really didn't want to do because of the law of the Medes and Persians. The king wanted to rescue Daniel, a man of God. But because of the conspirators he threw his beloved Daniel into the den of lions. God protected Daniel with his angel. Thus Daniel was proved innocent. Now the king's turn came to press the conspirators. At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. Before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones. This is the destiny of ungodly men.

Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language throughout the land, "May you prosper greatly! I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of

Daniel." In his decree the king also shared his life testimony. "For he is the living God... his dominion will never end. He rescues and he saves... He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions" (26b-27). So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

In this passage we learn that one person's life of prayer is very important. One person's life of prayer is indeed great, greater than the kingdom of Media and Persia.