

Daniel's Prayer

Daniel 6:10-17

Introduction

The chapter began with a brief description of Daniel's position in the Medes and the Persians new administration. King Darius set Daniel and two others as governors over 120 provincial districts (vv.1-3). The governors and new administrators apparently plot to destroy Daniel by exposing some fault or failure in order to accuse Daniel before the king. When they are unable to find fault they persuade the king to sign a law that temporarily requires all peoples to petition the King only; effectively making prayer a criminal act punishable by death (vv.4-9).

In this passage of Scripture Daniel prays (vv.10-11) providing evidence to present to the king to prosecute Daniel (vv.12-14). At that point the king understands that he has been manipulated by selfish and evil men to destroy Daniel (v.14). In his distress he attempts to formulate a plan to deliver Daniel (v.15). But the law is the law. The king will execute the law but offer his own prayer for protection; "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you" (v.16).

What do you do in a crisis? What will Daniel do? He will pray. But what if refusing to pray could make the crisis go away? For Daniel the temptation is not to commit some grave sin like bowing down to a golden statue (chapter 3). For Daniel the test will be to pray and trust God.

What is your trial or test today?

What role will prayer play in your test?

Daniel's Daily Prayer (vv.10-11)

Daniel 6:10–11 (NKJV) 10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.

11 Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.

In this verse we discover much about Daniel's personal life and prayer life.

Daniel is aware of the new law and violates the law.

Daniel's willingness to break the law was in order to obey God's law.

Here we are given a glimpse into the prophet's character. Daniel's prayers are an admission of dependence and humility but will also become an act of bravery.

He prays in the direction of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is home. Jerusalem is the City of the Great King. Jerusalem is the place where God's Messiah and God's Kingdom will be firmly established. The children of Judea have been removed from Jerusalem because of sin and disobedience to God. But Daniel believes that Jerusalem plays an important role in the future of

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the Jews. In Daniel 9 he prays for the forgiveness of Israel and restoration to the land. In that chapter we read about Daniel's intercession; confession of his sins and the sins of his people. He reviews Bible history and confesses that the nation has been wicked and God was righteous to judge them. He knew the warnings of Moses and knew that his people deserved far worse than what they were experiencing. He prays for Jerusalem even though it was a city in ruins. Why pray for a desolate city? Because God promised to end their captivity (Jeremiah); return the Jews to the land and rebuild the city (Jeremiah 29:10-14; 30:10-24; and Isaiah 44:28). **Daniel believed these prophecies and turned them into believing prayers.**

He kneels. It is an act of humility, dependence and urgency.

In the Bible Solomon kneels at the dedication of the Temple (2 Chronicles 6:13).

The Psalmist urges us to kneel before the Lord our God our Maker (Psalm 95:6).

Jesus kneels in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:41).

The leper kneels when he begs Jesus for cleansing (Mark 1:40).

Solomon kneels in reverence.

The Psalmist kneels in worship.

Daniel kneels continually.

Jesus kneels in submission.

The leper kneels for cleansing.

Stephen kneels when he forgives his murderers.

Paul kneels when he prays for the faithful in Ephesus.

He prays three times a day which speaks of frequency. A note reminds us that this was his custom since early days. History. Frequency. Humility. Thanksgiving. In Psalm 92 we have an example of a Psalm or song sung on the Sabbath. It is a Psalm of praise and thanksgiving to God (vv.1-3). Thanksgiving is made for God's judgment on the wicked (vv.4-9) and His blessing on the righteous (vv.10-15).

What do we know about Daniel's prayer life? He was a man of deep devotion to God; expressing thanksgiving to God with an utter sense of dependence upon the Lord his God.

We learned earlier that Daniel prayed when King Nebuchadnezzar demanded that if dream was left un-interpreted; Daniel and his friends would die (chapter 2). When Daniel's friends were getting ready to face the fiery furnace they called upon the Lord for a solution to their problem. Here we are given an ever so brief glimpse into the prayer life of Daniel but what a glimpse. We think about the immediate circumstances of the prayer. Babylon has fallen. Darius is the king. The king has been duped by evil government officials who have convinced him to sign a law making it illegal to petition any deity except the king himself.

What do you suppose Daniel prayed? Clearly it involved thanksgiving (v.10) and supplication (v.11). Supplication is a word hardly ever used in everyday conversation. It literally means to make request or petition. What might Daniel be asking? He might be asking for wisdom for himself or the king. He might be asking for courage or deliverance for his people.

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In the New Testament Jesus teaches his disciples to pray in real personal relationship with the God of Heaven. Jesus instructed His disciples to say "Our Father". To pray in faith; "which art in Heaven". To worship; "hallowed be thy name". To pray with a sense of expectation; "thy kingdom come" and submission "thy will be done." But also petition; "give us this day our daily bread". Confession; "and forgive us our debts". Jesus reminds His disciples to acknowledge their dependence; "and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

What is your crisis? For Daniel the stakes are life and death. And for some of you the stakes are just as high. You have a life threatening disease. Your marriage is at risk. Your job is at risk. Your future is at risk.

Daniel prayed, he believed in the power of prayer and knew that the God he prayed to listened and answered prayer. **It may be that our refusal to pray, individually and corporately that might be the single greatest cause of our apathy and indifference. Or worse—our spiritual impotence.**

We know how Daniel's crisis will resolve; but what of our own?

Daniel's accusers watch as Daniel prays.

Daniel makes no attempt to hide his prayers. He prays by an open window. Do you think Daniel might be experiencing some fear? If he does we are not told. Daniel continues to pray. He can't count on the king to provide the guidance and strength that he will need to navigate the crisis.

Think about Daniel's prayer. Only the true and living God can provide what Daniel needs.

And what of your crisis? Pray first. God is the true source. Pray with an object in mind. In what sense? Daniel prays toward Jerusalem. We pray toward the heavenly Jerusalem. Our future lies in Heaven. We pray for the salvation of our children, grandchildren; family, friends and enemies. We pray for ourselves, one another, Pastors and sick believers. We pray for rulers, enemies, Israel and all men.

Do you think Daniel's detractors dissuaded his prayers?

What distracts your prayers? What hinders your prayers?

Accusation? Satanic activity? Unconfessed sin? Carnal motives? Unbelief? Refusing to submit to Biblical teaching? Refusing to forgive or be forgiven? Carnal motives?

Daniel's Detractor's Prosecution (vv. 12-13)

12And they went before the king, and spoke concerning the king's decree: "Have you not signed a decree that every man who petitions any god or man within thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter."

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13 So they answered and said before the king, "That Daniel, who is one of the captives from Judah, does not show due regard for you, O king, or for the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day."

The enemies of Daniel bring forth the accusation. Didn't we just pass a law that every man who petitions any god or man within thirty days, except you O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The law did not seem to allow for exceptions. Zero tolerance.

The accusers are quick to point out that Daniel was a captive of Judah. A Jew. The accusers and conspirators quickly spin the activities of Daniel into a personal plot that attacks the king and the law. Daniel did not simply slip up—three times in one day he violated the law.

And what is the truth? Are Daniel's prayers a reckless disregard of the king's policies and person? Or are Daniel's prayers part of his deeply held beliefs that the God of Heaven not only requires but deserves worship and praise? Why does Daniel pray? To fulfill some religious obligation or is it a manifestation of love and fellowship for his Creator?

Daniel's prayers were never meant to harm the king (v.22).
Our prayers are not meant to harm others.

The King's Distress (vv. 14-17)

14 And the king, when he heard these words, was greatly displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.

There is much to consider in this complex sentence. The king was "greatly displeased with himself" or distressed. The exact reason is not made clear. Is the king upset because he has been manipulated by his subjects to put a valued member of his staff at risk? **Does the king love Daniel?** Does the king blame Daniel in some way? Why does the king want to save Daniel? **Does the king want to avoid the consequence of what he now knows to be a bad law (see *Apollos Old Testament Commentary; Ernest C. Lucas; p. 151*)?** Does the king simply not want to lose a very competent and valuable servant? Whatever the reasons this king wants to save Daniel. And here is the irony. **This same king—who was duped to believe that everyone should be made to make petition to him cannot find the answer to save Daniel.**

The king stays up all night to come up with a solution to rescue Daniel.

The king is trapped—by evil political operatives and his own immutable decree.

There are important lessons to be learned by legislators in this passage. **We need lawmakers with vision. Before making decisions we should look for unintended consequences. What are the consequences if we make this law?** The book of Proverbs warns (29:20); "*Do you see*

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a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him” (see also 19:2; 21:5).

15Then these men approached the king, and said to the king, “Know, O king, that it is the law of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed.”

The wicked manipulative government officials will not let it go. It doesn't matter if the law is wicked and harmful and unjust. It may not be changed.

But we can change unjust laws. We have the right to petition our government. We have the right to elect legislators who value religious freedom.

16So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, “Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you.”

In an earlier chapter Nebuchadnezzar called on all to worship the statue on the plains of Dura (Daniel 3:1). The king defied any god to deliver the three captives from the sentence imposed (3:15). Now this king expresses sincere desire *“that Daniel's God will deliver him from the sentence he faces under Darius' own decree” (ibid; p.151)*. Does the king really believe this or is this just wishful thinking?

Whatever else it means—the king has no power to deliver Daniel. The king's statement whether he knows it or not; is a powerful statement and a prophetic statement.

The king is well aware of Daniel's faithfulness and dependence upon God.

Can the same be said of you?

I read somewhere that faith may be defined as saying “yes” to the Savior. In Matthew 9:28 blind men came to Jesus. Jesus said, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.” In Matthew 13:51; Jesus asked His disciples if they understood the parables of the mustard seed, the leaven, the wheat and the tares, the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price, the dragnet, and they said to Him, “Yes Lord.” In Matthew 15:21-27 A Gentile woman begs Jesus to heal her demon-possessed daughter. At first Jesus ignores her and even the disciples attempt to send her away. She begs “Lord help me” (v.25). Jesus answers; “It is not good to take the children's bread, and throw it to the little dogs.” And she said, “True Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table.” Martha said, “Yes” to His word concerning her brother. Peter said “Yes Lord” to His question about love (John 21:15-16). Jesus said, “I'm coming back.” John said, “Yes Lord come” (Revelation 22:20).

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Daniel is brought before the king. He is cast into the den of lions.

This is a brutal form of execution. The Aramaic word for den includes the idea to dig—as in a pit or hole or cavern. Dens were underground pits. The den contained two openings or entrances; there was an opening on the top to feed the lions. People could be lowered into this opening. The lions would have entered through a second opening or door; which was likely located on the side of a hill or embankment; which led into the pit. Daniel was apparently lowered into the pit from the entrance at the top.

17Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed.

The stone was meant to prevent escape and the seal was meant to insure that no one would tamper with the execution order from the outside. The signet was typically worn around the neck. It was often an intaglio jewel that contained both the name as well as a distinct symbol. Anything stamped with the signet carried with it the authority of the person who owned it. Sometimes rulers would give their signets to another official tasked with acting on their behalf (like Pharaoh to Joseph—Genesis 41:42).

The seal was meant to insure that no one; not even the king would tamper with the lions' den. It reminds me of another seal; placed on a future stone; a Roman seal that was placed on the tomb of Jesus to make sure no one tampered with His remains.

Daniel is found guilty of breaking the law.

Conclusion

Daniel's prayer becomes Daniel's protection. We pray to the Father in the name of the Son. We pray in the Spirit. Only God can save from sin. Prayer defeats the devil. Prayer restores the backslider. Prayer strengthens the saint. Prayer heals the sick. Prayer sends forth laborers. Prayer accomplishes the impossible. Prayer reveals the will of God. Pray first. Pray often. Pray in humility. Pray with boldness. Pray in faith. Pray sincerely. Pray simply. Pray definitely. Pray in accordance with God's will.