

Daniel – Marked by Prayer

Topic: The importance of regular, disciplined and courageous prayer.

Name of God: Yahweh Yasha – Savior/Helper (Isaiah 43:3; 49:26)

Daniel 6:10-16 When Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went into his house. The windows in its upper room opened toward Jerusalem, and three times a day he got down on his knees, prayed, and gave thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

¹¹Then these men went as a group and found Daniel petitioning and imploring his God. ¹²So they approached the king and asked about his edict: "Didn't you sign an edict that for 30 days any man who petitions any god or man except you, the king, will be thrown into the lions' den?" The king answered, "As a law of the Medes and Persians, the order stands and is irrevocable." ¹³Then they replied to the king, "Daniel, one of the Judean exiles, has ignored you, the king, and the edict you signed, for he prays three times a day." ¹⁴As soon as the king heard this, he was very displeased; he set his mind on rescuing Daniel and made every effort until sundown to deliver him. ¹⁵Then these men went to the king and said to him, "You as king know it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no edict or ordinance the king establishes can be changed." ¹⁶So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"

Image of a cereal box from <http://www.cynical-c.com/archives/bloggraphics/box1272.jpg>



Have you ever noticed how the cereal companies market their cereals? Somewhere you will find a little blurb that shouts out "A source of 8 or 9 essential vitamins". What they don't mention in such big words is that their cereal is 50% sugar as well.

The point is that there are vitamins that you I need to daily put into our bodies if we are going to remain healthy and strong. In our health conscious day and age we are all more than aware that our bodies require a regular input of foods that contain all the essential vitamins and minerals that a human body needs. If we don't get these essentials into us then we weaken and become susceptible to sickness.

Just as there is a list of essential vitamins that we need to take in to be physically healthy the same is true spiritually. For you and I to be strong in the Lord and strong as Christians there are some essential practices that must a part of our daily lives. These disciplines are essential, non negotiable practices that make for strong Christians.

In I Timothy 4:7b-8 it says,

- **1 Timothy 4:7-8 HCSB** But have nothing to do with irreverent and silly myths. Rather, train yourself in godliness, (8) for, the training of the body has a limited benefit, but godliness is beneficial in every way, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

This is a good verse to memorize because it reminds us that godliness doesn't come naturally. It takes effort, discipline, perseverance, commitment and hard work. It also shows that such training benefits us in this life as well as in the life to come.

PRAYER IS A DISCIPLINE!

We must all suffer one of two things: the pain of discipline or the pain of regret or disappointment. The topic of prayer is immense and I could preach dozens of sermons on the subject, but here's the bottom line. If you and I are going to be strong Christians then we are going to have to train and discipline ourselves in the area of prayer.

That we might be encouraged to take up this discipline and so reap untold benefits, let us consider the account of Daniel in Daniel 6. The lions aside, our focus today will be upon Daniel as a man of prayer.

Image of Babylonian prisoner frieze from <http://www.flavinscorner.com/Prisoners.jpg>



When he was just a young teen Daniel was taken into the land of Babylon as a captive of war. God was punishing Israel for her sins.

Image of Babylonians torturing their prisoners from <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/17328/17328-h/images/427.jpg>



Here we see a frieze on a Babylonian palace wall that demonstrates the "kind treatment" generally offered to Babylonian prisoners. Keep this image in mind as we consider Daniel opposing the king's decrees in a few moments. God's decree was that for 70 years Israel would be captives of this savage nation.

At this point in our text Daniel was approximately 85 years old. He was an old man but a godly old man. For most of his life he had been a top official in the Babylonian kingdom which is amazing really. He was a Jew, not a native Babylonian. Yet God saw to it that he was elevated to an extremely influential position in the Babylonian kingdom: a kingdom noted for idol worship and sin.

Here's a great verse that you need to memorize. In 1 Samuel 2:30 God says

- **1 Samuel 2:30 HCSB** "Therefore, the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Although I said your family and your ancestral house would walk before Me forever, the LORD now says, "No longer!" I will honor those who honor Me, but those who despise Me will be disgraced.

What was the secret to Daniel's "success" and place of honor in the kingdom of Babylon? Honoring God was his priority. He had a heart for God. He was sold out for God and because of that he was blessed: God says to you and me "Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise will be disdained."

Daniel's enemies did not like his potential.

In the book of Daniel we are made aware that Daniel was up for a big promotion. Here he was in this vast empire and the king had in mind to make him the #2 guy over the whole thing.

The reason: it was not because of favoritism or anything else but the fact that Daniel was the most qualified guy for the job. He had all the tools. He had all the skills (of course we ought to be reminded that according to Daniel 1:17 that all of these abilities came from God) Problem: Daniel's co workers were not to happy about this.

Daniel's enemies did not like his integrity.

At times you I will hear the phrase "This is a cut throat business". Well, that's what Daniel's co workers fancied doing —except that had some lions in mind to do the actual business. With a guy like Daniel in place they wouldn't be able to get away with anything. They wouldn't be able to secretly line their pockets. With a man of integrity like Daniel around they would have to run a clean ship.

Daniel's enemies did not like his race.

Another factor most certainly at work here is racism. How was it was that they "home grown Babylonians" were being shut out of the top job by some conquered Jewish guy?

Daniel's enemies did not have ammunition against him.

Plan hatched: Get some dirt on Daniel so that he is at the very least disqualified from the job.

Problem: they couldn't find anything to nail him on. They sifted their way through Daniel's present and past job records and in spite of all their digging: nothing. Daniel was a man of impeccable integrity. He was found to be trustworthy. He was free from any hints of corruption. He was in not one iota negligent in the carrying out of his duties.

Let me ask you a question. When it comes to your place of work can that be said of you and me? Are you completely trustworthy, are you free of any hint of corruption. Are you in any way negligent in your duties?

I dare say there is work to be done in being this kind of person in the workplace— in being "above board" in all our dealings like: extended break times, the stealing of office supplies, the cutting of corners, the office politics and back stabbing that takes place, the giving of yourself 100% to the job, etc

Because of the kind of person Daniel was and the record that he had it was determined that the only way to get him would be as it related to his walk and allegiance to God.

This is sort of neat. Imagine having an opponent who says of you. The only way I'm going to be able to get you is to somehow come after you through your faith in God. The only way to get you is on some religious grounds.

- [Daniel 6:5 HCSB](#) Then these men said, "We will never find any charge against this Daniel unless we find something against him concerning the law of his God."

Note, if you will that in the course of determining a strategy for their plot that they understood Daniel's practice of prayer to be part of "the law of his God." Prayer is not an option. It is a command of God. When we do not pray we in effect sinning.

So they approached king and said "we would like you to be sole object of peoples prayers for the next month". Sign this into law, and by the way if anyone breaks this law the penalty is that they are thrown into the lions den (that was there way of executing criminals in those days)

The king fell for it. Who knows why? Most likely his sense of pride..... The king's actions show us how a person's failure to think carefully regarding important decisions can have disastrous consequences.

It turned out that this foolhardy decision was one that the king sorely regretted and repented over. It is thought by the wording of our text that perhaps this king became a follower of God.

If a law was passed that for the next 30 days you and I could not pray, upon the pain of death what would you do? Would a law like that even be a problem for you?

It may be that you look at this text and say to yourself. Why did Daniel pray in such a way that he allowed himself to be caught praying? Why didn't Daniel change his prayer habits and the location of his praying?

Our text tells us that upon hearing of the king's command that Daniel went home to his upstairs room, the room that had windows open and facing toward Jerusalem and he got down on his knees as he had done for his whole life, 3 times a day and he prayed, as he had always done.

You see Daniel no doubt lived by the following "Those who honor me I will honor". He no doubt lived by his code and the same words his 3 friends uttered to Nebuchadnezzar years before

- **Daniel 3:16-18 HCSB** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to the king, "Nebuchadnezzar, we don't need to give you an answer to this question. (17) If the God we serve exists, then He can rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and He can rescue us from the power of you, the king. (18) But even if He does not rescue us, we want you as king to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up."

In the NT Peter and John are recorded as saying to the Sanhedrin who had forbidden them from speaking of Jesus

- **Acts 4:19-20 HCSB** But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it's right in the sight of God *for us* to listen to you rather than to God, you decide; (20) for we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

You see, to Daniel, daily prayer with the windows open towards Jerusalem was a matter of obedience to the law of God

- **1 Kings 8:28-30 HCSB** Listen to Your servant's prayer and his petition, LORD my God, so that You may hear the cry and the prayer that Your servant prays before You today, (29) so that Your eyes may watch over this temple night and day, toward the place where You said: My name will be there, and so that You may hear the prayer that Your servant prays toward this place. (30) Hear the petition of Your servant and Your people Israel, which they pray toward this place. May You hear in Your dwelling place in heaven. May You hear and forgive.

Daniel was not going to change his ways in the matter of prayer to obey some law made by man. He had faith that God could deliver him. We must understand in our lives today that prayer is a matter of God's law, not that we pray to legalistically satisfy God but because prayer is a vital act for a strong Christian. In and by true prayer we are blessed and heaven and earth move. In and by prayer we are strengthened, others are lifted up and sweet communion is had with God.

As a young man Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine. (Daniel 1:8) His resolve to honor, serve, and obey God to the full continued through his whole life. More than 70 years later he still full of conviction and godly fire. He would not compromise himself for the sake of man. He would honor God to the end no matter the personal cost.

Some of you may be wondering: why was it so important for Daniel to pray by a window that faced Jerusalem. First note this: just because praying at a window it doesn't mean that he was doing it publicly. He's in his own home in a room of his home. Perhaps he was visible from the street or another home but that matters little. His prayers were not for show. 1 Kings 8:22-53 answers for us why Daniel faced Jerusalem in an unimpeded way (windows open) when he prayed. Listen to v. 46-51

- **1 Kings 8:46-51 HCSB** When they sin against You--for there is no one who does not sin--and You are angry with them and hand them over to the enemy, and their captors deport them to the enemy's country--whether distant or nearby-- (47) and when they come to their senses in the land where they were deported and repent and petition You in their captors' land: "We have sinned and done wrong; we have been wicked," (48) and when they return to You with their whole mind and heart in the land of their enemies who took them captive, and when they pray to You in the direction of their land that You gave their ancestors, the city You have chosen, and the temple I have

built for Your name, (49) may You hear in heaven, Your dwelling place, their prayer and petition and uphold their cause. (50) May You forgive Your people who sinned against You and all their rebellions against You, and may You give them compassion in the eyes of their captors, so that they may be compassionate to them. (51) For they are Your people and Your inheritance; You brought them out of Egypt, out of the middle of an iron furnace.

Characteristics of a prayer warrior:

1. Obedient
2. Earnest and committed
3. Unswerving in his resolve to honor and obey God and not yield to man
4. Uncompromised. To alter his prayer life and the way he prayed was to compromise and Daniel was not a man of compromise.
5. Disciplined
6. His prayers are regular, planned and intentional
7. Faithful

Daniel did not fear those who could harm his body but rather he feared God. Consider:

- **Matthew 10:28 HCSB Don't fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; rather, fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**

Conclusion

Today the issue for us is not about whether or not we pray at an open window that faces Jerusalem.

The issue is not about whether you pray in public though it is shameful if you deny your Lord in public.

The issue at hand is this: prayer is not an option for us. To pray is the command of God. Prayer takes discipline and commitment. It's about being faithful. You want to be a strong Christian? Pray. You want to be a person who has a fire in your heart for God? Pray.

Also, are you 100% committed to taking up your cross for Christ? This text suggests that Christians who would live holy lives should expect persecution. A heart for God is going to mean that you and I pay for a price—and its worth it for there is a reward that far outweighs the light and momentary troubles that we will face.

When you give yourself to holiness and its pursuit - when you discipline and apply yourself to godly living, the world is going to notice. Some will be saved, others will hate you and you will suffer for righteousness' sake.

Daniel stands as our example, an old man who could have compromised, but chose not to. He was a man of God who understood the importance of being obedient in prayer.