**DANIEL’S LIFE OF PRAYER**

**(Daniel 6:1-28)**

**“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.” (v. 10)**

In the previous passage, King Belshazzar lifted himself against God due to his pride and lack of a learning mind. God weighed and dealt with him according to His justice. We learned that we must live before God and honor Him, who weighs and numbers our days. On the contrary, in today’s passage, we meet a man who lived in the sight of God and honored God through his life of prayer. Through today’s passage, we can learn about how much Daniel valued his prayer life and how God was pleased with his prayers. May God bless us to mold our prayer life and live a victorious life!

Darius, the Medo-Persian king, conquered the great Babylonian Empire in 539 B.C. He reorganized the kingdom for effective administration by appointing 120 satraps with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. Look at verse 3: **“Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.”** Daniel was probably in his 80s. As a teenage boy, he was deported to Babylon when the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah in 605 B.C. Even though Daniel was one of the exiles, the king exalted him as ruler over the entire province of Babylon (2:48). King Darius, after conquering the Babylonian kingdom, also recognized Daniel’s integrity, faithfulness, and wisdom and planned to set Daniel over the whole kingdom.

The king’s favor for Daniel, however, prompted jealousy in the other administrators and satraps. They were eager to seek any basis for charges against Daniel in order to destroy him. But they could find no corruption in Daniel’s conduct of government affairs. Finally, they conspired to exploit Daniel’s piety in serving his God. They went to the king as a group and said: **“May King Darius live forever! The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers, and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions’ den” (6-7).** They appealed to the king’s ego by exalting him as a representative of their gods. They revealed the satanic character of using any means necessary to destroy God’s servant. The king agreed since the decree would enhance his authority and glory over his people. Later, however, the decree would become a snare to the king because it could not be repealed once issued in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians.

What was Daniel’s response to the decree? 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 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.”** Daniel knew all about the story behind the decree, and he knew the consequence of breaking it. But he went home to his upstairs room and prayed three times a day just as he had done before. What can we learn from his life of prayer?

First, he prayed, risking his life. As most people would have done in such a situation, Daniel could have sought ways to evade the enemies’ plot. He could have stopped praying for the 30 days in which the decree was in effect. But he prayed, risking his life. Why did he do this? Because to him, prayer was his priority and the most important work to do in that situation, more valuable than preserving his worldly honor, wealth, and even his life. He wanted only to love God with all his heart regardless of the situation. To him, prayer was an expression of his personal love to God and faith in Him.

Furthermore, he believed that God is almighty, and His power is absolute to protect him from his enemies. He solely depended on God and entrusted everything to God. He believed that God would work through his prayer. He knew that prayer indeed opens God’s limitless storehouse to His children. He believed that prayer is the most powerful weapon that God puts in His children's hands. Therefore, he made a decision to fight a spiritual battle by depending on God through prayer, even risking his life. So Daniel got down on his knees and prayed to God, even though he knew about the decree.

In the Bible, prayer is the most prominent duty and promise that God gave His children. But at the same time, it is one of the things believers are most ignorant and negligent about. Why is this? It’s because there is a spiritual force that hinders our prayer life. Ephesians 6:12 says, **“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”** In this fallen world, Satan tries to destroy God’s people. One of his leading strategies for this is to greatly hinder Christians’ prayer life. He pursues believers’ spiritual bankruptcy by hindering prayer because he is well aware of the power of prayer. So he makes our minds too busy to pray. He makes us regard our affairs in the world, security, pleasure, and wealth as more important and more urgent than prayer. He tries to nullify the most powerful weapon from God by making it rusty. As a result, many Christians have anything but a vague idea of the power of prayer. The church is hardly even aware of the power of God placed into her hands. The only way to preserve our prayers from being hindered is to accept prayer at its true and great value and put praying as the most important thing to do more than any other activities.

The men who have done mighty things for God have always been mighty in prayer. They have well understood the value of prayer. Martin Luther, when once asked what his plans for the following day were, answered: “Work, work, from early until late. In fact, I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer.” He knew that prayer was the greatest work he had to do as of first importance. In the midst of his busy ministry from the early morning until late at night, our Lord Jesus got up before dawn to pray to God. He had an intimate fellowship with the Father, depended on Him, and sought His will and guidance for His daily ministry through prayer. Even as the Son of God, He put His first priority on prayer; how much more should we put our priority on praying?

Second, he prayed regularly. Look at verse 10b: **“Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.”** "**He prayed three times a day, just as he had done before"** means that his prayer had been a lifelong, regular, and irreplaceable activity in his life, like breathing and eating. We do not know when he began such regular prayer, but he must have been determined to pray three times a day when he was young, just as when he made a small decision in his teens not to defile himself with the royal food and wine offered to idols. Through his regular prayer, he could develop a personal and intimate relationship with God.

As a deer pants for streams of water, Daniel's soul panted for his God (Psalm 42:1-2). As a bird returns to its nest, so he naturally returned to God through his prayers. He poured out his love to God, gave his thanks to God, and laid all his burdens and agony before Him in his prayers. He listened to God’s sweet voice and understood God’s will and vision. His hour of prayer became his most delightful time. His deep personal relationship with God through his prayer gave him courage, wisdom, and power to serve his demanding responsibilities and overcome the world. His disciplined life of prayer was the source of his power to face Satan’s threat and render glory to God.

Like Daniel, we have to build our own personal prayer lives. However, developing one’s prayer life requires spiritual training. A prayer life is a holy life. It’s easy for us to build ungodly habits to entertain our sinful desires. But building a holy life requires our personal decision, self-denial, and training. It is like rebuilding new muscles as an athlete develops his muscles through continuous self-training. During the discipline, he must endure suffering. But after developing his muscles, he can freely use his body to compete. To wake up early in the morning to pray demands self-denial. After finishing our daily work, to pray in the evening demands self-denial. However, we should not expect a holy life without spiritual training. We should not expect that we can suddenly wake up as powerful men and women of prayer without self-discipline. 1 Timothy 4:8 teaches us about the benefit of spiritual training: **“For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”** By molding our prayer life, we can grow as powerful servants of God. Furthermore, we can come to know God better, and our relationship with Him will give us continual and ever-increasing delight.

Third, he prayed with thanksgiving and for God’s help. In a seemingly tragic situation as an exile, he accepted God’s sovereign will for his people and for himself and thanked God. He did not complain about his situation or the ordeal he was in. He believed in God who knows everything and is in control. Philippians 4:6-7 say, **“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”**

With thanksgiving, he also asked God for help (11). He needed God’s help in many areas of his life. Doubtless, the responsibility of high office rested heavily on Daniel, and he sought God’s wisdom and discernment in the decisions he had to make. Moreover, he must have prayed for his people. He prayed in his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Through this, we can know where Daniel’s heart was and what Daniel’s main prayer topic was. Daniel 9:20 says about his prayer in detail: **“While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the Lord my God for his holy hill.”** He prayed for the restoration of his people and the temple in Jerusalem. He prayed for his people by confessing his sin and his people’s sins with a contrite heart. He kept the lamp of prayer burning during this dark time in Israel’s history. He accepted his mission as a prayer servant for his people during the exile and served God’s will faithfully by keeping prayer vigil.

Compared to the huge Medo-Persian kingdom, one person, Daniel, and his prayer seemed so small and insignificant. But God listened to his prayers with a broken heart. Through Daniel's prayer, God moved the king’s heart, and the exiles could later return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. God uses a person of prayer in his redemptive history.

Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) was an English missionary to China. He founded the China Inland Mission which at his death included 205 mission stations with over 800 missionaries. One of the stations attracted his attention, where both the number and spiritual character of the converts had been far greater than at other stations. This rich harvest of souls remained a mystery until Hudson Taylor came home on a visit to England. A gentleman came forward to make his acquaintance. In the conversation which followed, Missionary Taylor was surprised at the accurate knowledge the man possessed concerning this specific inland China station. Responding to his surprise, the man replied, “The missionary there and I are old college-mates; for years we have regularly corresponded; he has sent me names of inquirers and converts, and these I have daily taken to God in prayer.” At last, the secret was found! A praying man at home was the source of power for the station. The number and efficiency of the workers in God’s vineyard in all lands depend on the men and women of prayer.

God wants us to use our most powerful weapon, prayer, to save lost souls and enlarge his kingdom. In Mark 11:17a, Jesus revealed his heart for his church and the world saying, **“Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’?”** Indeed, praying men and women are needed in the house of God to fulfill his will. God’s work is the work of prayer. When prayer fails, the world prevails. However, when prayer is dominant in the Church, the kingdom of God powerfully advances. When we think about the ungodly atmosphere of the world, unchanging people, and our own sense of insignificance, we may become powerless and tired. But we can remember the weapon God gave us and pray for wandering souls, our campus, and America. God needs none other than devoted prayer servants like Daniel to fulfill his will.

Daniel prayed toward Jerusalem not only for the restoration of the holy city but also because he must have remembered God’s words in 2 Chronicles 6, Solomon’s prayer of the dedication of the temple. In 6:36-39, Solomon asked God’s forgiveness when God’s people become captives to a land far away or near due to their sins and if they have a change of heart in the land and pray toward the holy land, Jerusalem, and the temple. Daniel believed God’s promises and prayed.

Today, however, we don’t need to pray toward Jerusalem and the temple to ask God for his help. The Jerusalem temple was the shadow of Jesus Christ. We can pray to God in Jesus’ name. Jesus is our eternal High Priest, who always lives to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:24-25). In John 14:13-14, Jesus promises, **“…And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”** When we pray to God in Jesus’ name, God is pleased with our prayers, forgives our sins, and hears us. Praise God our Father, who hears our prayers through our Lord Jesus Christ!

Look at verse 13: **“Then they said to the king, ‘Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day.’”** Upon finding Daniel in prayer to his God, the enemies as a group immediately accused him before the king. When the king realized his officials’ trap, he was greatly distressed. He could easily ignore Daniel, a foreigner, in order to please his Persian officials. But he was determined to rescue Daniel. God moved his heart to have a love relationship with Daniel. The king did his best, but could not repeal his decree. As he ordered Daniel’s execution, he committed Daniel to God. Now Daniel was thrown into the lions’ den. Then his enemies brought a big stone and placed it over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and the rings of his nobles. The enemies thought that Daniel’s bones would be crushed by bloodthirsty lions. They assumed that they won the victory.

At the first light of dawn, the king hurried to the lions’ den and called in anguish to Daniel. What was Daniel’s response? Look at verses 21-22: **“Daniel answered, ‘May the 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, Your Majesty.’”** God changed the lions’ ferociousness into gentleness. God can change the minds of men and animals. God proved His almighty power and faithfulness by protecting His servant. **“The king 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” (23).** The author attributes this miraculous protection to Daniel’s trust in God. God protects his servants who trust in Him. Prayer is the test of our faith, and the severer the trial, the more glorious the results.

The king ordered the accusers to be thrown into the lions’ den with their wives and children. The lions crushed their bones before they reached the floor of the den. It showed God’s judgment upon them. The result of their rebellion against God and His servant was tragic. Then the king issued a decree regarding the God of Daniel. Look at verses 26-27: **“I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. ‘For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.’”** He proclaimed the God of Daniel as the living God whose kingdom is forever. This is the theme of the Book of Daniel. The king also confessed that God rescues and saves His servants; He performs signs and wonders. Through Daniel's life of prayer, God's name was highly glorified throughout the land. God made Daniel prosper during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus (28).

I learned that I have been negligent in prayer. I made many excuses about not praying. One of them was my busy life. However, the actual reason for neglecting prayer was not because of lack of time, but because of lack of zeal to have a fellowship with God. I repent of putting my priority on worldly concerns more than having a fellowship with God. I want to mold a life of prayer as of first importance as Daniel did.

A person who prays seems insignificant in the world, but from God’s point of view, he or she is a spiritual hero and heroine. To a prayerful man, God is present in realized force; to a prayerful church, God is present in glorious power. May God bless each of us to understand the true value of prayer, develop our prayer life, and pray with thanksgiving and for God’s help in confidence in Jesus’ name! May God bless us to experience his power and glory through our prayers.