

## **Daniel: A Model of Prayer**

Daniel 6:10

We want to have a message today on just one verse, on one topic, but on a matter that is as big a whole book. I mean, I want us to consider today the topic of prayer.

Prayer brings us to the Lord our Savior and our Protector. Let me give you two fine illustrations of this.

Prayer brings us to the Lord our Savior.

*Charles Spurgeon gives the account of a woman coming to him following a service, along with two of her neighbors, and who was in very deep distress. Her husband had fled the country; and, in her sorrow, she had come to church, and something said in the sermon made her think that the pastor was personally familiar with her case. Spurgeon said he had really known nothing about her; and had made use of an illustration which just fitted her situation. She told her story, and a very sad one it was. He said, "There is nothing that we can do but kneel down, and cry to the Lord for the immediate conversion of your husband." We knelt down, and I prayed that the Lord would touch the heart of the deserter, convert his soul and bring him back to his home. When we rose from our knees, I said to the poor woman, "Do not fret about the matter. I feel sure your husband will come home; and that he will yet become connected with our church."*

*'She went away, and I forgot all about her. Some months afterwards, she reappeared, with her neighbors, and a man, whom she introduced as her husband. He had indeed come back, and he had returned a converted, a Christian man. On making enquiry, and comparing notes, we found that, the very day on which we had prayed for his conversion, he, being at that time on board a ship far away on the*

*sea, stumbled unexpectedly upon a stray copy of one of my sermons. He read it; the truth went to his heart; he repented, and sought the Lord; and, as soon as possible, he came back to his wife and to his home. He was admitted as a member at the church, and his wife who up to that time had not joined the church, was also received into fellowship with us. 'That woman does not doubt the power of prayer. All the unbelievers in the world could not shake her conviction that there is a God that hears and answers the supplications of His people.'*

There is the Lord sought and found as our Savior.

Now, another illustration of prayer finding Him to be our protector.

During the days of Protestant persecution in Scotland in the 1600's, the period that came to be called the "killing times," a minister nicknamed, 'Poor Old Sandy,' was with his small flock hiding in the fields from the soldiers who were hunting them. They were exhausted and about to be captured, so the pastor halted their progress, knelt down, and offered this prayer: "Lord, wrap your mantle around us, and cause our pursuers to chase those able to escape." He arose and they went a little further, their enemies drawing closer and closer. And then a great fog rolled over them all, so thick you could not see more than a few feet. The small church could hear their persecutors speaking. And soon another voice telling the commander that some other Christians had been sited and off they went to chase them! This was exactly what the pastor had asked!

These stories bring before us the reality, the vitality of true prayer.

As we come to Daniel 6 again, we find ourselves in a sacred and holy place – with this man of God in prayer.

Even if this book did not say that he prayed, we would know it was so, as the holiness of such a man is only the fruit of close converse and trust to God in the prayer-closet.

But we don't have to guess. In chapter 2 – early in our introduction to him – his first resort when he faced a great emergency was prayer: read vv. 17-18. We find a few chapters later, in Dan. 9, a most unique text on prayer, as Daniel prays for what the Lord already promised He would accomplish, releasing the people of God.

Daniel's godly closeness to God was legendary. In the neighboring book of Ezekiel, we read: "Even *though* these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst, by their *own* righteousness they could *only* deliver themselves," declares the Lord GOD. (Eze 14:14)

But here we find Daniel in the moment of trial. Verse 10 begins with the awful and barbaric policy that denies freedom of religion. It is awful and barbaric that this has ever been the case. It is awful and barbaric that this would be so for such a long time in the world. And it is awful and barbaric that this is yet the case today!

Here we are praying for men and women, whole families, imprisoned in this modern age, for the religion they hold dear! How barbaric and ugly, grotesque and evil, for any religion to coerce a soul to believe or practice its teachings! How vicious and cruel to demand – against one's own intelligent and mature convictions – to bow contrary to one's own religious belief, and not protect freedom of religion to others!

Sadly, we even have elements of this in our own land of the free and home of the brave. In military and government contexts – chaplains

and other religious personnel are pressured, coerced, and even denied the right to pray in the name of Jesus! This is horrible! This is barbaric! This is something you would expect in ancient Persia – not modern America or Canada! But such is the battle of the ages – between the Seed of the Woman and the Seed of the Serpent in Genesis 3:15.

Daniel's integrity and faithfulness cannot be missed. Somebody has said the more we have to do, the more we need to pray. Likewise, the more need we have, the more we need to pray. The flesh tends to the opposite; but not the Spirit of grace.

The needs all around Daniel, and the new dangers he felt he was in, drove him all the more into the arms of the One who had protected and provided for him his many years.

See three qualities of his prayer life:

1. He prays covenantally – toward Jerusalem; where his God had placed his name. See 1 Kings 8:33. Doesn't this verse say a mouthful for Daniel and his condition! And may we not do the same now in the NT? To pray to the Lord for His church, for his people, for the kingdom of God that stretches all over this world? Do you so pray? Is your heart toward Jesus, toward His glory in heaven?
2. He prays humbly – notice his posture here, praying upon his knees, and giving thanks to His God. With all lowliness of mind and heart; acknowledging all comes from above. Prayer ceases to be prayer when it is done in pride. Like the Pharisee who prayed to himself! He thought he was better than other men, when we

are the worst sinners we will ever know! Prayer is a part of your worship and gratitude.

3. He prays consistently, perseveringly – three times a day, as he had done previously. Where did he get that? Is that some kind of a law? Look back to Psalm 55:17. Jesus taught us about an insistent widow who kept on asking for help from a human judge; how much more will your God and Father come to your speedy rescue when you cry to him, night and day! Do you lay out your needs before the Lord, fully, faithfully and perpetually? Ask, seek and knock! That is the way of obtaining blessing; there are no short cuts. Wrestle like Jacob did, not letting go of God until He blesses! That is how we obtain! Is that your prayer life? What would we learn if we opened the windows on your prayers to God? Would it be one of seeking and finding the face of your Lord and Savior?

These are some of the qualities of true prayer.

A truly devout soul knows the preciousness of prayer, of this life-line to God, of this very *breath* of godliness. That is perhaps the best metaphor to describe prayer. Prayer is breathing. And you are not living as a Christian if you are not a man or woman of prayer, a boy or girl who talks to Jesus! No earthly force – no king, no man, no circumstance, not even a devil – can stop a believer from breathing!

We have said before that this episode is very much like chapter three and the Hebrew children being forced to worship an idol. Here Daniel is being forced to not worship the true God. Yet he does not stumble but continues straight on to be faithful. What led him to faithfulness in spite of danger in prayer? What leads us to lay hold

upon God's altar and say, 'I shall not be moved?' Upon Jesus, the Lord of all? To say, I will be found faithful even unto death!

This really is the heart of our message today – that we would walk away from here resolved to be like Daniel, in his rock-solid commitment to fellowship and prayer with the living God.

Let us look at 5 qualities – like five fingers – for us to reach up our hand in true prayer!

### **Five items:**

1. The **duty** of prayer – our obedience to God over and above our obedience to men. This is our responsibility. It is not if you pray but when you pray. This is not something for just some believers, for super Christians, for the more mature. You are born again in prayer. You cannot be saved apart from prayer. When Saul was converted – that murderous persecutor of the church, while he was breathing out the flames of hell – the Lord arrested him, converted him, and what was the sign of his change? He told Ananias, not only is he on the street called Straight, but that he prays! There is a duty in prayer, that reflects our obedience to the Lord – and this is over and above our obedience to men! We are to obey men, the authorities in our lives. But when Caesar demands what is to be rendered to God alone, we may not obey, we must not obey, but are to obey God **RATHER THAN** men! We must put His will above all in our lives! That is what it means to live *Soli Deo Gloria*!
2. The **dependence** of prayer – moving from our responsibility, we come to our neediness before Him. Our need demands such

trustful crying out to God, as a child to a father, a mother. Isn't this what we do when we are little? Mom, look I have broken this or Dad, I have hurt my arm, my hand, my foot – can you help me? How much then should children of God, who have an even greater dependency upon the Lord for an even greater life and health, an eternal life and an everlasting wholeness, look to the Creator rather than the creature?! “Abba Father” is over all of our communion with the Lord.

3. The **demand** of prayer. Prayer is a glorifying of God, so how can He go unglorified by those saved by Him? Saved unto Him? He is glorified by obedient and dependent prayer. To offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving is to honor the Lord – Psalm 50:23. If we are not praying to Him, then where are to turn for help? What are we seeking to take the place of God? And if we are looking around us instead of upward, aren't we turning our backs on Him at that point? It seems so – it seems so!
4. The **desire** of prayer. Prayer is not only a duty but a privilege, coming not only as a servant commanded to come, but as sons and daughters, who are welcomed and called by name. We are acknowledged! What a privilege we see here – to talk the very God who has made us! To call upon Him as Father and Friend! This is the desire – prayer is the offering up of our desires unto God. This is the fire beneath the altar, that lights the wood. Better that your heart be without words than your words be without heart!
5. The **delight** of prayer. We should love fellowship with God; to be with Him. Is prayer a burden to you? Is prayer dreary? Is it just something you have to do? The English word is: “Perfunctory” –

routine, automatic, just going through the motion? Are we saying, “I can’t wait until this is over,” or “when can I come to speak to God again?” Are you at all like the deer that pants for the water, the soul seeking the Lord? There should be genuine, real communion with God. Prayer, says Augustine, is the measure of our love. And what is love but the desire to unite!? So if we do not want to unite with God, we do not love Him; and if we find his presence dull, a weariness, well, that says a lot as well. We do not grudge time to what we truly love. The newlyweds can’t wait to be with one another. The parents love to pick their child up at the airport to see them. A true friend loves the fellowship of friends.

Let me close with this charge to you, that you will not advance or grow in the godliness that you want in your life, without vital, consistent prayer.

“Who ever knew a very holy man who did not spend much of his time in prayer? Did ever a man exhibit *much* of the *spirit* of prayer, who did not devote much time to his prayer-closet? George Whitefield says, ‘Whole days and weeks have I spent prostrate on the ground, in silent or vocal prayer.’ ‘Fall upon your knees, and grow there,’ is the language of another, who knew what he affirmed. These, in spirit, are but specimens of a feature in the experience of outstanding piety, which is fully consistent.

It has been said that no great work in literature or in science was ever wrought by a man who did not love solitude. We may lay it down as an primary principle of religion, that no large growth in



holiness was ever gained by one who did not *take* time to be often long *alone with God*.

‘Holiness,’ says Dr. Cudworth, is ‘something of God, wherever it is. It is an stream from Him, and lives in Him; as the sunbeams – though they pass over us – yet they are not so much here where they shine as in the sun from whence they flow.’ Such a possession of the idea of God we never gain but from still hours of prayer. For such holy joy in God, we must have much of the spirit of Him who rose up a great while before day, and departed into a solitary place and prayed, and who continued all night in prayer – ‘the morning star finding Him where the evening star had left Him.’”

Still Hour, pp. 64-65.