

The Prayer Life of Daniel

Text: Daniel 6:1-11

Introduction:

1. Daniel chapter 6 is likely the most famous chapter of the Book as it contains one of the most well-known Bible stories of Daniel and the lion's den.
2. Daniel 6 also introduces the second great world empire – Media-Persia. Remember, the two arms of silver represent the two peoples that made up this empire. Darius was a Median (See Dan. 5:31)
3. Daniel at this stage had been about 68 years in captivity and would therefore be somewhere in his eighties or nineties.
4. Daniel's walk with God will again come under fire in this section but it will merely highlight the depth of his godly character and his unwavering faithfulness to His God. It will provide us a window into the prayer life of this great man of God.
5. It has well been said that no Christian is greater than his prayer life. The real test of our Christian profession is what we are when we are alone with God in our private lives.

Look firstly at...

I. The Promotion of Daniel (Vs. 1-3)

Daniel finds favor in the eyes of this new monarch and is quickly elevated to a place of authority in the kingdom.

A. The Position of Daniel (Vs. 1-2)

1. He was over the princes (Vs. 1)
 - a. Darius was a structured and organized king. The Medo-Persian kings also had less power than the Babylonian kings. They functioned somewhat like a democratic monarchy.
 - b. It is interesting that Book of Esther, which also documents events that took place during the Medo-Persian Empire, mentions 127 provinces. This number differs to the 120 princes mentioned here but the events recorded in Esther came approximately 50 years later than the fall of Babylon so the arrangements would have been adjusted by then.
 - c. These princes were accountable to Daniel and the other two presidents (Vs. 2)
2. He was over the presidents (Vs. 2)
 1. 'first' = indicates his position among the three
 2. "have no damage" = the purpose of the appointments. The word 'damage' means "to suffer loss". This would include things like the king's revenue.

B. The Preferring of Daniel (Vs. 3)

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1. “because an excellent spirit was in him” = the reason why he was preferred.
 - a. Daniel’s performance excelled the others. This was largely due to his spiritual condition. Your spiritual life affects your work life!
 - b. Daniel had the presence of God in his life. He had developed godly character through a close walk with God (i.e. the study of the Scriptures and the work of the Spirit).
 - c. “the king thought to set him over the whole realm” = because of Daniel’s trustworthiness, the king was contemplating making him ruler of the whole realm.

Look secondly at...

II. The Plot Against Daniel (Vs. 4-9)

A. The Stimulation of their Opposition (Vs. 4a)

1. ‘then’ = harks back to the promotion of Daniel in the previous verse and the king’s contemplation of elevating him even further.
2. A spirit of jealousy was the source of their opposition to Daniel. Being upright and godly does not usually put you in favor with many!
3. Jealousy is described in the Bible as being “cruel as the grave” (Song 8:6).
4. Prov. 27:4 says, “*Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but **who is able to stand before envy?***”
5. Jealousy leads people to do the most evil and unjust things. It was the driving force behind the religious leaders of Christ’s day seeking the murder of our Lord (Mark 15:10).

B. The Scrutiny of their Opposition (Vs. 4b-5)

They searched the professional life of Daniel to try and find something they could use against him. The results of their search are worth noting:

1. They found Daniel to be a man of Integrity (Vs. 4b)
 - a. Daniel is described as ‘faithful’. This implies he was trustworthy and dependable.
 - b. They could not find ‘error’ or ‘fault’ against him in his role within the kingdom. He had a clean record.
 - c. The New Testament word that would describe Daniel’s life is the word ‘blameless’. The word ‘blameless’ does not mean faultless but it means to be above reproach, having no just cause for accusation.
 - d. Challenge: This should be the testimony of every one of God’s people. Our walk with God should be such that we those around us have no just cause to bring reproach upon the name of Christ.

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2. They found Daniel to be a man of Intercession (Vs. 5)
 - a. As these wicked men put Daniel's life under the microscope, there was nothing they could find to readily lay hold of as a just and reasonable cause to have him disqualified. However, there was one thing their intense scrutiny showed up – Daniel was a genuine man of God who took his walk with God seriously!
 - b. What a testimony this is of Daniel that these heathen men could discern the genuineness of his walk with God and know that he would not bend the knee of compromise when their planned edict was past. Can you imagine the princes gathering together to share their discoveries from spying on the life of Daniel? What would the spies have to report? He prays and reads his Scriptures and conducts himself in public affairs with dignity and honesty!
 - c. Challenge: We are all being watched by the world in some way. What stands out to them from our lives? Do they see a Christian living a hypocritical life or would they say, this man or lady is the real deal!

C. The Strategy of their Opposition (Vs. 6-8)

1. Deception of the king (Vs. 6-7a)

They employed two tools to deceive the king into signing the new law:

 - a. Flattery – “King Darius, live forever” Flattery is false or insincere praise “bestowed for the purpose of gaining favour and influence, or to accomplish some purpose.” (Webster) They appealed to the king's pride to secure his support for their wicked plan.
 - b. Falsehood – “all the presidents of the kingdom...have consulted” This was a lie! Daniel was not consulted on this piece of legislation yet they falsely made it sound unanimous.
2. Decree from the king (Vs. 7b-9)

Let's look at this piece of proposed legislation!

 1. It was a fixed law – “firm decree” (Vs. 7); “altereth not” (Vs. 8)
 2. It was a religious edict limiting freedom of worship. When a government seeks to legislate in the area of faith and conscience, it has stepped outside its God-ordained bounds!
 3. It was to be enforced with the threat of capital punishment (Vs. 7). Those who disobeyed would face a frightful and gruesome death in the lion's den, the Persians preferred method of execution.
 4. It was signed into law by the king (Vs. 9)

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Look thirdly at...

III. The Praying of Daniel (Vs. 10-11)

These verses give us a window into Daniel's inner spiritual life. We can discern 7 qualities of Daniel's prayer life in these verses.

A. The Persistence of his Prayer Life (Vs. 10a)

1. Daniel is steadfast, faithful and courageous in the face of this threat to his life. When it came to a choice between loyalty to the state or loyalty to God, there was only one option for Daniel – honor God!
2. A godly prayer life that goes beyond the mediocre, will meet with opposition.
3. What would your response be to such a decree? What sort of council would 21st century Christendom give? Many believers go more than 30 days without serious prayer. They would have no problem obeying such a decree and would even coat it with a thin veneer of spirituality.

B. The Place of his Prayer Life (Vs. 10b)

1. 'chamber' = his bedroom in his house
2. Matthew 6:6 mentions the 'closet'. 'closet' = storeroom, innermost secret room
3. It seems Christ often prayed in the garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:39; Luke 22:44)
4. Note: We learn from this that the atmosphere most conducive to prayer is a place that is quiet and secluded.
5. C.H. Spurgeon: "It is well to have, if we can have, a little room, no matter how humble, where we can shut the door, and pray."

C. The Precepts backing his Prayer Life (Vs. 10c)

1. Daniel's practice of praying towards Jerusalem was based on Solomon's prayer of dedication for the temple (See 1 Kings 8:46-50 & 9:3). This practice was unique to Israel as a nation but the principle of having a prayer life that is directed by Scripture remains.
2. John 15:7 "*If ye abide in me, and **my words abide in you**, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*"

D. The Posture of his Prayer Life (Vs. 10d)

1. There are a number of postures from prayer in the Scriptures but the key thing to remember is that our posture represents a heart attitude towards God.
2. Kneeling is "most expressive of humility and reverence and submission to God." (Matthew Henry)
3. Psalm 95:6 "*O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.*"
4. There are many examples of God's people kneeling in Scripture. E.g. Christ in the garden (Luke 22:41) and Paul with the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:36)

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E. The Plan for his Prayer Life (Vs. 10e)

1. There was a regularity – 3 times a day. Daniel took time to be holy! We need to make time to seek the Lord.
2. There was a consistency – godly habits important. “The finest of God’s servants must maintain regular and fixed prayer habits in order to continue steadfast in devotion to the Lord.” (Lehman Strauss)

F. The Prayers in his Prayer Life (Vs. 10f; 11)

1. Prayer – “and prayed...praying” He actually prayed during his times of prayer!
2. Praise – “and gave thanks before his God” Daniel praised the Lord even during this difficult time. When Daniel was praying, he was “before” God, in His glorious presence.
3. Petition – “and making supplication”

G. The Pattern of his Prayer Life (Vs. 10g)

1. ‘aforetime’ = in time past. Daniel was simply doing what he had been doing now for many years. Daniel’s prayer life as a young man is highlighted in chapter 2 some 62 or more years earlier. Daniels prayer life was clearly something that had remained a priority for him all those long years in captivity.
2. Daniel did not wait for a crisis to begin praying to his God. “His prayer life was a source of spiritual strength to live for God in the midst of a wicked generation.” (Cloud)

Conclusion: How important to you is your walk with God? Are you steadfast in the face of opposition? Do you seek the Lord in the good as well as the bad times?