

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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The Language of Faith: Sermons On Prayer

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

*“A Prayer that Shut the Mouths
of Lions”*

July 7, 2013

Sermon Text: Daniel 6

Scripture Reading: Daniel 3

Introduction-

James 5:16-18 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is

working. (17) Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. (18) Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

Prayer works. Prayer is effectual. Prayer is powerful. All this is evidenced many times in the prayers of God's people as recorded in Scripture. And the experiences of Christians down through the centuries confirms this as well.

Hebrews 11:32-34 And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets-- (33) who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, (34) quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness,

became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

This morning I wanted to spend our time looking at a real man, in a real historical situation, who really prayed and experienced the power of God through prayer. That man is Daniel, and it is the account of Daniel in the lions' den. Prayer is faith in action. It is the language of faith, and we see it very plainly in Daniel's life.

Listen then to God's Word-

Daniel 6:1-28 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; (2) and over them three presidents, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss. (3) Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other presidents and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. (4) Then the presidents and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him.

Evil hates good. Darkness despises light. As Daniel fulfilled his office in righteousness and integrity, the enemy began to growl. Daniel was on his way up in the kingdom, and justifiably so. Like Joseph in Egypt, the King recognized an excellent spirit in Daniel that squelched corruption and bribery and intrigues.

And so the conspiracies to destroy Daniel began.

It is vitally important that every Christian learn this evil tactic well because it is still used against Christ's people today. Imagine, if you can, a godly person in Washington D.C. who is blessed by the Lord and who gains favor because of their diligence and integrity. As they work to effect justice, they will make many, many enemies. And those enemies will set out to destroy them. We see the exact same methods used against the Lord Jesus – false accusations and, in the end, using truth to murder Him.

I want us to take very serious note of the following:

In a corrupt system or society, most often only the corrupt will advance to high position. Therefore, we must

take great care in assessing true greatness. In a structure devoid of truth and righteousness, real greatness will only be found in low places and position.

And this certainly applies to the visible, earthly church. It applies today just as it has down through church history. It is a great error on our part to hold "great" people in awe. God's true people are most often found outside the great cathedrals and pomp and ceremony.

Well, these enemies could find no ground of accusation, no matter how many of Daniel's tax records, old school buddies, bank accounts, etc that they scrutinized. They could find no dirt on him. He was squeaky clean. Quite an amazing fact.

And so they adjust their plot--

(5) Then these men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God." (6) Then these presidents and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! (7) All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the

counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. (8) Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." (9) Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.

Evil of the most wicked and subtle kind frequently uses the righteousness of the righteous against them. And that is exactly what happened here in Daniel's case. These enemies resolved to use Daniel's godliness against him.

And what they did to pull this off is also a very frequent ploy of evil – *they used the legal system. They passed an unrighteous law and then used it to condemn Daniel.*

God grants authority to civil rulers for the purpose of *righteousness*. The king and the law are supposed to be instruments that cause the wicked to fear –

Romans 13:1-4 Let every person be subject to the governing

authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. (2) Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. (3) For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, (4) for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

But wicked men are always trying to enact laws that oppress the righteous. In our day, for example, we will probably see laws passed that prohibit churches and Christians and pastors from announcing that homosexuality is a sin. In some parts of Europe I believe this is already the case. Once that happens, there will be spies sent in among God's people to spring the trap and imprison anyone who violates those laws.

And we have many other unrighteous laws in effect already. They punish the righteous and benefit the wicked. If you want to

see one of the biggest examples of those kinds of evil laws, just study the family court system and child custody laws and see what you find. I know, for example, of a godly woman right now who is required to send her children to her ex-husband for unsupervised visitation even though it was proved at trial that he is guilty of all kinds of sordid, perverted evils against them. And if she refuses to comply with these visitation sessions, she will be put in jail.

So the enemy loves to use the legal system to oppress the righteous. So it was with Daniel, and so it still is today.

Notice also another principle that is true about our enemy's tactics:

Evil always works to gain allies. And it will strive to gain the most powerful as its allies whenever possible.

(10) When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done

previously. (11) Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God.

Here we see Daniel's faith in action. *When Daniel knew...* Here we have civil disobedience in action. Daniel was not naïve. He knew he had enemies in high places. He knew what they had done in getting the king to sign that law. And he knew that he was publicly violating that law when he continued to pray.

But Daniel also knew something else – that His ultimate King was the Lord and that no matter what the consequences, he must obey God. When the law of man comes into conflict with the law of God, the choice is clear for the Christian.

Daniel, you recall, had some experience in this matter of disobeying an unrighteous law and king in the matter of his three friends in the fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar had learned that there is a King of kings. Now it is time for King Darius to learn the same. The Jews are only in Babylon because of God's decree, and the Babylonians and Medes are under His rule as well.

Notice also this matter of the enemy *spying* on the righteous. They came “by agreement” and found Daniel praying. It was an evil conspiracy.

As Christ's people today, we need to beware of these very same tactics. Listen to Jude –

Jude 1:3-4 Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. (4) For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

And Paul to the Galatians-

Galatians 2:4 Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in--who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery--

The enemy loves to work covertly, undercover, in the darkness. As in any war, the enemy can be expected to utilize spies who put on an outward façade of being one of

us. I have no doubt at all that as unrighteous laws are passed, spies will be sent out into churches, disguised as eminent Christians, to try to trip us up and accuse us just as these enemies did to Daniel.

So always remember, we must never put out a sign in front of our church building that says "Everyone Welcome." Not everyone is welcome here!

Well, the thing continues--

(12) Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, "O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." (13) Then they answered and said before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day." (14) Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him.

Trapped by his own pride, the king realizes how foolish he has been. But not even he can undo "the law of the Medes and Persians." He has been tricked into condemning his most valuable and faithful servant. And now no man on earth can rescue Daniel.

(15) Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed." (16) Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!" (17) And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.

Have you ever noticed how often Scripture paints a hopeless picture? That is what we have here. There is NO hope for Daniel. Thrown into a pit full of hungry lions. A heavy stone was put over the opening and sealed with the king's own seal. No man would dare try to move it. We should not wait for such times to pray, but when those hopeless

times come, we must not lose hope but must pray all the more.

NOTE: I believe that we are also meant to see in Daniel a type of the Lord Jesus Christ:

- A righteous man in whom no unrighteousness could be discovered
- Falsely accused by his enemies
- “Buried” in a tomb with a stone and seal.
- And, of course as we are about to read, a “resurrection.”

(18) Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him. (19) Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. (20) As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" (21) Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! (22) My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm." (23) Then the king was

exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

All through the book of Daniel we see pagan kings being brought to a knowledge of the true God. We are not specifically told whether Darius prayed to Daniel’s God or not, but it certainly seems a possibility. We do know that, like Nebuchadnezzar, Darius was brought to a point at which he gave glory to God.

That Darius had some kind of faith in Daniel’s God is evident by his actions. Not only did he tell Daniel “May your God deliver you,” when Daniel was thrown into the lions’ den, but he fasted and perhaps prayed all night to Daniel’s God. In addition, he does something rather unusual – he runs to the den first thing the next morning. Why? I mean, any thinking person familiar with what happens when people get thrown into the lions’ den wouldn’t bother going, let alone crying out “Has your God been able to deliver you?”

I would have very much liked to have been there when Daniel’s voice answered the king from the

pit! (Notice another parallel – there had been an angel sent to the “tomb”). Daniel’s faith was rewarded. God was able. He was delivered. God was glorified.

When we trust in the Lord even in the most hopeless circumstances, we will never be disappointed. Never. Our prayers are always heard and answered.

As we are about to see, one of the answers to the prayers of the righteous is the judgment of the wicked:

(24) And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions--they, their children, and their wives. **And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.** (25) Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: "Peace be multiplied to you. (26) I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. (27)

He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions." (28) So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

The Lord is once again glorified and shown to be the King of kings, announced to all the world by a king. This proclamation is really the theme of the book of Daniel-

“...for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end.

It was the very same outcome in regard to the fiery furnace incident:

Daniel 3:27-30 And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. (28) Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their

bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. (29) Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, **for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way.**" (30) Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

And again in connection with the humbling of King Nebuchadnezzar-

Daniel 4:33-37 Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws. (34) At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; (35) all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the

host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?" (36) At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. (37) Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; **and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.**

Don't you find it incredible that when the wicked were thrown into the lions' den they were attacked and ripped apart before they even hit the bottom? This underscores the miraculous and powerful intervention of the Lord. The lions didn't happen to be full or have indigestion when Daniel was thrown in.

Are we not intended to see a picture here of another future event? The judgment of the wicked. Do you see that in Scripture this principle comes forward many times –

The wicked scheme against the righteous, but they end up perishing by those very same schemes.

God has this sense of irony in His justice. Haman, for example, had scaffolds built to kill the Jews – but he himself was hung there.

Esther 7:9-10 Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, "Moreover, the gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, is standing at Haman's house, fifty cubits high." (10) And the king said, "Hang him on that." So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the wrath of the king abated.

Esther 9:24-25 For Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur (that is, cast lots), to crush and to destroy them. (25) But when it came before the king, he gave orders in writing that his evil plan that he had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

Psalms 140:9 As for the head of those who surround me, let the mischief of their lips overwhelm them!

Psalms 141:8-10 But my eyes are toward you, O GOD, my Lord; in you I seek refuge; leave me not

defenseless! (9) Keep me from the trap that they have laid for me and from the snares of evildoers! (10) Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I pass by safely.

This is meant to be great encouragement to the oppressed, and we have every right to pray these prayers, asking that the Lord cause His and our enemies to perish by means of their own devices.

When we pray as in the Lord's prayer – *Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven* – we are actually praying that the Lord's enemies would be defeated, that all opposition to the Lord's will would be destroyed. When we pray that the Lord Jesus would come again soon, we are praying for that great Day of Judgment to come at which He will vindicate His people and cast all the wicked into the Lake of Fire. And it is a good and right thing to pray for this.

There are many other examples of mighty prayers of faith recorded for us in Scripture. Like this one, they provide us with great encouragement to trust in the Lord, to never give up praying, and to know with certainty that Christ will render us justice and destroy all His enemies. Prayer is one of the chief ways in which we evidence our faith in these things, and it is one of the great weapons that the

Lord has given us to use in this battle
against the kingdom of evil.

We too can pray prayers that shut the
mouths of lions.