

Walk by Faith – Pray By Faith

8/12/18 – Pastor Randy

Daniel 6:3-13 (ESV)

Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. ⁴ Then the high officials 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. 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 high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! ⁷ All the high officials 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.

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. 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."

As I conclude my series on walking by faith from Hebrews 11, God has some important things to say to us this morning about the relationship between faith and prayer from the life of Daniel. While Daniel is not named specifically in Hebrews 11 as one of the heroes of the faith, there is no question that Daniel was among those the Spirit was referring to when we read in verse 32,

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“... who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions...”

The earliest information we have about Daniel reveals that he was part of a group of young men from Jerusalem that were taken captive by King Nebuchadnezzar’s army and brought to Babylon. These young men belonged to the Jewish noble class and were selected based upon a combination of looks, intelligence, and ability, to serve in the King’s palace. The most important thing to understand about Daniel is that he was a devout worshipper of the one true God and a faithful follower of His laws as revealed through Moses. However, he was taken as a captive into Babylon to serve in the palace of Kings who worshipped idols and did not follow God’s laws.

In chapter 6 we learn that Daniel had distinguished himself **above** the other officials. Because of his superior gifts, abilities, and character the King decided to elevate him to a place of great prominence and power within his administration. Not surprisingly, his peers became jealous of him. A foreigner, an outsider, was being elevated above them. They didn’t like someone they considered inferior to them being treated as if he was superior to them.

Then we are told that they began to spy on Daniel to try and find some dirt on him for which they could accuse him. In our culture we sanitize this kind of rotten behavior by calling it “opposition research”. It is corrupt because it is most often motivated by a desire to destroy one’s opponent rather than a desire to protect the people or uphold justice. The evidence of the corrupt motivation of Daniel’s accusers was the fact that when they couldn’t find any actual moral failure on his part they decided to make his faithfulness to God a cause of accusation. They had to pervert the law, creating a situation where righteousness would be considered evil. They persuaded the King to enact into law a prohibition against prayer, hoping that Daniel would not compromise in his faithfulness to his God, and end up breaking the law of the land. They created a situation where Daniel would have to choose. He would have to either be faithful to his God or obedient to the King.

What was Daniel to do? What to do? It doesn’t seem like that question was even a question for Daniel. Verse 10 is, in my opinion, the most important

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verse in this story and a word for all of us today. *“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.”*

Every part of that statement is vital. “When Daniel knew the document was signed.” In other words, when Daniel knew that his praying was now a crime subject to the penalty of death, what did he do? He went to his house & three times a day, got down on his knees - at his window in full view – and prayed and gave thanks to God. The last phrase is key; “as he had done previously”. He didn’t start praying as some kind of reckless, rebellious act against the law. He didn’t start praying, he continued praying. The important thing about Daniel is not that he started praying, but that he wouldn’t stop praying. Why should he stop? Why should he change his behavior? The King changed his law, God didn’t change His law. If God didn’t change why should Daniel? Calvary, it doesn’t matter how much the culture around us changes, if God’s word hasn’t changed then neither should we!

Daniel’s adversaries reported his non-compliance to the King. When his enemies came to the King with their accusation against Daniel they said, “Daniel pays no attention to you, O King. Although their statement was in fact true, their intention was to make Daniel appear like an absolute rebel, with no respect for the King. Generally speaking, Daniel heeded the commands of the King. This is evident by the the fact that the King had so much respect and love for Daniel. It was in this instance he paid no attention. The motto of the puritans was “we live our lives before an audience of one”; the “one” being God. Daniel lived before an audience of one! We are called to respect our governing authorities unless the laws require us to disobey or deny our God.

The King was distraught because he loved Daniel and never realized that his law would create a situation where he would have been bound to have Daniel put to death.

The text indicates that he tried everything in his power to find a loophole around his own law that would have set Daniel free but there was none. He

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reluctantly had to send Daniel to the lion's den, holding out hope that somehow Daniel's God would perform a miracle and deliver him. That is just what Daniel's God did.

Hebrews 11 refers to Daniel as someone who through faith "stopped the mouths of lions". In Daniel we read that God sent an angel to shut the lions mouth, so Daniel did not rescue himself, God rescued Daniel. We are also told in the text that Daniel was rescued from death for two reasons. First we read that it was because Daniel was found blameless before God and then the text states it was because Daniel had trusted in his God. When we put this together here is the picture we get: Daniel's faith in God led to his faithfulness to God. The key feature of Daniel's faithfulness in this story is his commitment to prayer and worship. Daniel reminds us that a life of prayer is the by-product of a life of faith and prayer is also a means through which God strengthens our faith. To put it another way, faith leads to prayer and prayer leads to greater faith which then inspires greater faithfulness to obey God.

Hebrews 11:6 says, *"And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."* Drawing near to God in prayer does not happen without faith but prayer will absolutely be present when faith is present.

Practical suggestions for growing in your prayer life.

The portrait of Daniel painted for us by the whole book, not just chapter 6, reveals a man on his knees.

1. Schedule your prayer times.

The text says, *"He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God."*

What gets scheduled gets done. Daniel clearly had scheduled times during the day to pray. That these were set times is implicit in the text.

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Neither the OT or NT provide instructions regarding how many times you must pray each day but a tradition developed in Judaism and it was carried over into the early church to pray three times a day based on Daniel's practice and Psalm 55:17 where the Psalmist said, "**Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice.**"

In the Book of Acts, we find the disciples praying at the three distinct hours of prayer. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples in Acts two at the third hour of the day – the first "hour of prayer". In Acts 3:1 we read, "Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour". In Acts 10:9 we read that Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. Do we have to pray at these three exact hours of the day? No, the NT does not instruct us to do so, but it does model for us the practice of having scheduled periods of prayer. We ought to follow that example. We need to schedule time to pray because **what gets scheduled gets done.**

2. Learn to take problems to the Lord in prayer. Faith responds to moments of crisis or trouble with prayer. Fear panics, but faith prays. In Daniel, chapter 2, King Nebuchadnezzar became infuriated over the fact that none of his wise men could interpret his dream. When he threatened to have every one of them killed, Daniel went to the house of his friends and they began to pray to God for wisdom. In Daniel 9 and 10 we find Daniel entering extended seasons of prayer and fasting because he was in great need of wisdom from God.

3. Develop a habit of prayer and praise throughout the day!

The goal is to develop a constant awareness of the presence of God that results in a life of continual prayer. The NT instructs us to:

Pray without ceasing. (1Thessalonians 5:17) and to,

Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere (Ephesians 6:18)

Learn to take advantage of your "free mind time". When your mind is free such as when you are driving or any time when your mind is free from compelled thought. Do pray on a work break, don't pray during a staff or team meeting.

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4. **Remember that prayer is spiritual warfare.** In Daniel 10 the angel that came to Daniel with the answer to his prayer at the end of his 21 days of prayer and fasting, told Daniel that it took him to the end of the 21 days to get to Daniel with the answer because he had been opposed by demonic forces. There is a picture of angels and demons in some kind of cosmic struggle. This is one of the few places in scripture that gives us a little, a very little, glimpse into the reality of the spiritual warfare that is going on when we pray. The scripture does not answer many of the questions we would like it to, and God must have a good reason for this. The point for us today is pray and don't give up. Pray and don't give up. Pray and don't give up. Pray and don't give up.

CLOSE:

Those who walk by faith in Jesus, walk with a faith that overcomes fear and death because our faith in Jesus, at its core, is a faith in resurrection, the ultimate overcoming experience.

At the heart of the Christian faith is belief in the resurrection of Jesus. A belief that translates into a belief in our own resurrection (1 Corinthians 15). Our faith in Christ brings a confidence that even when staring down the mouth of a lion, even when we are about to be thrown into a furnace, even when

When Daniel was thrown into the lions den and the stone sealed it, Daniel's fate appeared sealed. The text says, *"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."* The rules of a godless culture pressured Daniel to stop worshipping, but God didn't tell him to stop worshipping. Daniel's enemies planned his funeral and wrote up his obituary, but God was still writing Daniel's story, not his obituary!!

When Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown into the fire, their doom was certain. The King asked arrogantly, "And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?" This is what we call a rhetorical question. It was a statement, out in the form of a questions, suggesting that not even God could deliver them.

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The Devil is constantly trying to scare you with threats of death! He wants to threaten you with physical death and, if he can't succeed there, he will try and tell you your hope is dead, your self-worth is dead, God's love for you is dead, your purpose in life is dead. He says, "Give up your hope, give up your pursuit of your God-given purpose, give up your faith! It's over. You won't make it; you can't do it! But the Holy Spirit says you have been born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. He says, In all things – things like tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, danger, or sword - we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

After God rescued Daniel from certain death, essentially giving him new life, He caused the pagan King who Daniel defied to declare that Daniel's God, "...he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. 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."