DANIEL’S LIFE OF PRAYER

Daniel 6:1-28

Key Verse: 6:10

“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.”

In chapter 5, we could see the fall of the Babylonian empire. Today’s passage, chapter 6, is about Daniel in the Medo-Persian empire. The kingdom of Babylon had gone and the kingdom of the Medes and Persians had come. In the rising and waning of the kingdoms of the world, Daniel was continually the prime minister of both kingdoms. The work of God was going on according to God’s plan influencing the world toward Christ’s coming and the eternal kingdom of God. In this chapter, Daniel’s prayer life was disclosed through his political rivals’ accusation. We believe that his life of prayer was the source of his strength and wisdom for his victorious life in the kingdoms of the world. Because of his life of prayer and obedience to God he was thrown into the lions’ den, but God rescued him. Then King Darius proclaimed to the people of his whole kingdom the living and forever-enduring God and his indestructible kingdom and unending dominion. What a victory of a man of God! What power! Let’s see this.

Verses 1 and 2 say, “It pleased Darius to appoint 120 Satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of them was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss,” This description shows how extensive the Medo-Persian Empire was with 120 provinces in the whole empire, each province governed by a satrap. And there were three presidents or administrators over the 120 satraps. And this shows what kind of king Darius, that is, Cyrus, was. He was an intelligent man.  He was an effective man in terms of organization and structure.

And in verse 3, “Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.” Here we see Daniel as a very old man. In chapter 6, Daniel was pressing on hard at 90 years of age. He was still God’s man. He was still God’s choice.  And he was still the choice of the king to be the prime minister. He was outstanding with an excellent spirit (ESV), above anyone in the kingdom of the Medes and Persians. One’s spirit matters in any age, young or old. We see that one’s life of faith in God’s given wisdom and power extends into old age.

Everything seemed to go well, the king’s outstanding plan and Daniel’s exceptional qualities in his excellent spirit which was recognized by the king. At this time of summit in his last public life, political rivals arose to pull him down. The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors formed a group and persuaded the king to issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to the king, should be thrown into the lion’s den. It boosted the king’s ego that he might be regarded as a god for 30 days. And the decree would not be altered in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed. The king was persuaded by the cunning politicians and put the decree in writing.

Then what comes next? Verse 10 says, “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.” This verse shows us several distinctive things about Daniel.

Daniel knew the decree that would take his life, but he was not afraid of the evil edict, though it was published according to the laws of the Medes and Persians which could not be repealed. He had to do what was right before God. In Acts 4, when the apostles were persecuted and commanded not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus, Peter and John replied, “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God” (4:19). Daniel and the apostles were courageous with a God-fearing and obedient spirit.

And he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. He did not change his open prayer place into a secret, closed spot out of intimidation or compromise. His upstairs room was his constant prayer room, which no one could invade or take away.

He prayed in his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the place where the temple of God was. It was the city of God. At this time of history, the first group of considerable Jews in Babylon returned to Jerusalem, for God moved the heart of Cyrus and used him for the Jews to go back to their land (2 Ch 36:22; Ezra 1:1) according to God’s promise in Jeremiah that the time of their captivity would be seventy years. Though Daniel had lived most of his life in the capital city of Babylon and now was living in that of the Medes and Persians, his hope was in the city of God. At the time of the dedication of the temple, Solomon prayed that when his people pray to God in repentance in the land of their captivity toward this city, God might hear their prayers and uphold their cause and forgive them.” (1 Kings 8:48; 2 Ch 6:34). God was pleased with this prayer. At this point he must have prayed for the restoration of Jerusalem including the temple of God. Jerusalem had fallen and the temple of God there had been destroyed because they had forsaken the LORD God. When he prayed for the restoration of Jerusalem, it was not only for the rebuilding of the temple of God there, but for Jerusalem to be restored to carry out God’s purpose of the salvation for all people through the coming Christ. Surely Daniel knew through King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in chapter 2 that all the kingdoms of the world would be crushed by a kingdom God would set up. This kingdom was depicted as a rock that struck the enormous, dazzling statue of gold, silver, bronze, iron and clay, and which itself became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth. This is the kingdom of Christ which will never be destroyed but endure forever. This is the kingdom of God, where God rules. At the time of Jesus’ birth, there were waiting people. One of them was Anna, an old widow. When she saw the baby Jesus, she spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Father, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come.” The kingdom of God starts with the prayer for and the saving of one soul after another.

And Daniel prayed three times a day, kneeling down. This was his prayer life formed as his daily pattern. It is truly amazing. Who could be busier than Daniel as the prime minister of such an empire? Yet, how could he pray three times a day? It showed his dedicated heart and earnestness to pray, seeking God and having clear prayer topics. David said in Psalm 55:17, “Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice.”

Daniel’s prayer of coming to God three times a day shows how much he depended on God and how he could keep his heart drawn to God amid so many distractions and troubles in life and so much work to do. How easy it is for our hearts to be distracted from God in our day-to-day life! And our self-dependence is strong even amid our weaknesses and sicknesses. We want to learn from Daniel, who got on his knees and prayed to God three times a day. We want to learn the spirit of such a prayer life. He diligently and earnestly came to God each day. This was his habit of prayer. With this habit, he could also pray in the time of emergency. As we studied in chapter 2, at the time of crisis in the Babylonian empire due to the king’s dream, Daniel urged his friends to plead for mercy from the God of heaven and he himself prayed earnestly. Then God heard the prayers and revealed the mystery concerning the king’s dream. We believe that Daniels’ diligent and devoted prayer life was the source of power and wisdom in this battlefield of the world, leading him to deepen his fellowship with God.

Also, we cannot overlook the description, “giving thanks to God.” He had been an exile in the gentile nation for such a long time. This time a group of evil people arose to devour him. Yet, he gave to thanks to God, his God. In his prayer, he must have been full of thanks to God for his abundant grace poured out on him from his youth in the midst of many troubles in life. Prayer and thanks go together. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” Paul also says in Philippians 4:6, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” He also said in Colossians 4:2, “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” It is really beautiful that the life of prayer and the life of thanksgiving go together. It is good to remember that Daniel was a man of prayer, so a man of power and wisdom, and also a man of thanksgiving. He was a praying man and a thankful man.

Now because of his consistent prayer life he became a target of the accusation by his political opponents. Verse 11 says, “Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help.” Consequently, they went to the king to make use of the royal decree manipulating him. They spoke to the king, “Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or man except to you, O king, would be thrown into the lion’s den?” At this the king answered, “The decree stands—in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.” In saying this the king was trapped. At this opportune time they said to the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day.”

What was the king’s response? Was he furious with rage at Daniel, as Nebuchadnezzar was at Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? No. Verse 14 says, “When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him.” In KJV, “…he was so displeased with himself…” At this point the king must have realized that he was tricked by a group of these men. He was greatly displeased with himself and must have been furious at those who had tricked him. However, his heart was drawn to Daniel. This indicates what kind of relationship Daniel had built with the king. Daniel’s life of faith had influenced the king, winning his heart. So he made every effort to rescue and save Daniel. Yet, it was too late. The evil men went as a group to the king and said to him, “Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edit that the king issues can be changed.” By saying this now they were making use of the unchangeable decree of the king decree. The king was really cornered and was helpless, not being able to exercise his authority as king, and so he gave the order. They brought Daniel and threw him into the lion’s den. The king said to Daniel, “May your God, who you serve continually, rescue you!” What an interest acting as a king! Probably he was the only king in history to have such a wish in the optative sentence while carrying out death penalty against his wishes. Again, this showed the relationship between Daniel and the king which had been established.

This relationship is continually shown. A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel’s situation might not be changed. Daniels’ situation was inflexible. That’s the end to the king. At this, the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep. Although everything seemed to be over, the king could not turn his heart from Daniel.

The story continues. At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lion’s den. Again, what an interesting deed as a king! In his distress and hopelessness, he could have slept a lot and got up late. Probably he had never gotten up so early. When he came near the den at the first light of dawn, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?” This is a truly interesting and beautiful, loving act. Yet, the king must have not been sure whether he could hear Daniel’s voice again. However, amazingly the king could hear Daniel’s voice from the lion’s den. Daniel answered, “O 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, O king.” At this amazing voice and scene, the king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. In this reversed situation, the king could excise his authority as king, giving the orders. When Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

The point of long description, including 6 expressions of the king’s unusual and uncommon response toward Daniel in the midst of the evil scheme, this vividly shows Daniel’s beautiful influence to the king through his life of faith and prayer. In this way, his life was victorious in the powerful pagan kingdom of the world.

At the king’s command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lion’s den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones. We see the destiny of the wicked.

Then king Darius wrote to all the peoples nations and men of every language throughout the land: “May you prosper greatly! 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.” What a proclamation from the mouth of the king of the Medes and Persian empire. Surely this was the fruit of Daniel’s life of faith. In chapter 2 verse 44, Daniel also spoke concerning this kingdom in the interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.” And in chapter 4 King Nebuchadnezzar made a person confession after receiving the humble training from the Most High God, “His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation” in verse 3 and again in verse 34, “His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation.” In the book of Daniel, until now there are three times of this proclamation concerning the kingdom and dominion of the Most High God. All these have come out through the pagan kings’ dream and lives. Certainly it testifies to the victory of Daniel’s life of faith in the Most High God over the gentiles kingdoms of the world. Verse 28 says, “So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, even in the reign of Cyrus.

In this passage it is clearly seen that a man of God Daniel was more powerful than the kingdom of the Medes and Persians as he had been than the kingdom of Babylon. The man of God was a man of prayer and a man of great influence through his life of faith. May God raise up such Daniels in our time. May God help us to really learn the spirit of Daniel’s prayer life.