

DANIEL'S PRAYER LIFE

by Frank Wallace

Wallace's study of the prayer life of the prophet Daniel, examining his habits of devotion, his famous prayers recorded in Scripture, and the spiritual principles that sustained his faithfulness through decades of exile.

4 Chapters

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3. Prayer

Prayer This evening I want to engage you with the matter of prayer. Perhaps it is one of the things in the Christian experience that we neglect most. If we have prayed in the morning, given thanks for food and prayed in the evening, thanking God for His kindness and goodness to us throughout the day, then perhaps we feel that we have done all that is necessary. However, I feel that as we examine the exercise of Daniel and his prayer life, we will see that much more is required in the Christian life.

Prayer is the outcome of real concern. Whether it be for one's own spiritual progress, or for the glory of Christ, or for the prosperity of God's interests upon earth, it must always flow from one's own personal concern. If we are not motivated by these things then our prayers will be of a very shallow nature indeed, but if these things are continually in our mind and cause us concern, then we will find that our prayers will take on a different character, there will be a fullness to them, there will be an urgency about them, there will be a continuity of them, and such prayers are extremely appreciated in heaven. Daniel was a man greatly beloved (9:23, 10:11, 10:19), not only because of his personal behaviour, but because of the exercises that he carried day by day in Babylon whilst in captivity; and great results flowed from them for the glory of God. So this is what we want to consider this evening, not simply to impart knowledge (encouraging as that may be), but to stimulate in each one of our hearts a desire to pray more for the prosperity of the interests of the Lord in our localities, in this favoured country and throughout the world.

We would all admit that things could be a lot better than they are, individually, in the homes of the saints, and in the gatherings of the saints. There could be more substance, more life, more energy and exercise, and more evidence of progress instead of declension. The continual cry is heard, 'How can the situation be altered? How can we see more energy? How can we see more faithfulness? How can we see more glory for the Lord?', and the more we plan and scheme, the more we see how fruitless it is. I suggest to you, dear brethren, that if a company like this was stimulated into greater concern in prayer, then we would see things changing, God would come in in His power and in His wisdom, and give us the necessary direction, so that our lives might be more fruitful for Him Who has blessed us in such a wonderful way.

4. The Continual, Settled, Individual Prayer Life of Daniel

The Continual, Settled, Individual Prayer Life of Daniel

"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." (Daniel 6:10)

I have chosen this passage in chapter 6 to show a little of the private prayer life of Daniel before we consider the two other portions. Here we find the real secret of this man's greatness. Daniel was a captive in Babylon and yet in this instance he was not subject to the laws of the king, he was not subject to the directions that were imposed upon him, He was really concerned about doing the will of God. He knew God's will, and whatever the circumstance or occasion, he was governed by that will in spite of the danger and opposition that this aroused. He was a true and faithful man. In this chapter God reveals to us the secret of his power and of his faithfulness, it was his private life in prayer that was never hindered. Upon hearing the king's command he "prayed and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime". It was not a sudden burst of energy in prayer because the circumstances were difficult and his life was in danger, it was his continual practice. It was not something that was forced upon him, it was his joy. My dear friends, what a wonderful way to view prayer life, to see the settled disposition of Daniel, praying three times a day. I am perfectly sure that Daniel allowed nothing to interfere with the moments when he bowed his knees in prayer before his God. He was a great man, he had great responsibilities in administration and yet he could find time, three times a day, in settled portions to pray. We do not know how long, but he did it, it was his settled life, praying, praying, praying. We will consider later the substance of his prayers.

It says also that he prayed "to his God". I like that. It was not a God who was far off as far as Daniel was concerned, it was his personal God, One whom he knew in personal communion. God was a reality to him. God was not an abstract conception of the mind, but He was a living, glorious God to whom he could turn at all times and in all situations and find an answer, and who was also day by day in communion, his joy, his delight and his life. Is this your experience in prayer? Is this my experience in prayer? Is God near to us, or is He far off? Oh, what a challenge! We need brothers and sisters with a knowledge of God in this way, because God does listen to the prayers of His people and God delights to answer those prayers when they are in accord with His revealed will. The righteousness of the man was a living witness to the reality of His connection with God. In Ezekiel 14:1-23 Daniel is linked with two other men, Noah and Job, and God said 'Suppose these three men come with their righteousness it would not alter the situation in Israel, it is so bad'. But by the very mention of this, God is drawing attention to the righteousness of these three. Daniel was a righteous man, that is, he lived his life recognising the rights of God and obeyed those rights whatever the cost, and for this reason his prayers had power. James tells that "The prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (5:16), but Proverbs tells us that 'the prayers of evil men are an abomination to God' (28:9). We also read in 1 John "if we ask anything according to his will, he

heareth us" (5:14). This is the great secret of prayers that really work, they are in accord with the will of God.

It is evident that Daniel was fully in the knowledge of God's will. This is indicated by him opening his window towards Jerusalem. When the temple was dedicated, Solomon prayed to God saying, 'If the time ever should come when the nation is so unfaithful that it is taken into captivity, if there are those who would pray towards this temple then hear them, maintain their right, and grant them compassion on the part of those that hold them captives' (2 Chronicles 6:36-39). Here we find a man in full possession of that knowledge. He has not forgotten God's word, he has not forgotten that prayer, for God gratified the prayer of Solomon, 'Yes,' He says, 'my ear will be towards the temple, and not only my ear by my eye, and my heart continually' (2 Chronicles 7:12-16).

God's interests were centred in that place. Unfaithfulness in the nation had taken them away from that centre, but that never altered the fact the God was deeply concerned about His centre and His name that was placed there. And we find a man in captivity remembering that word and, in the full knowledge of that, praying accordingly that God would listen to his prayer; and He did. In the den of lions, and in all circumstances, God came to the help of His servant. His God was able to deliver him as He delivered the three young men (Daniel 3:1-30). Oh, what a wonderful God Daniel proved Him to be! and while the king spent a sleepless night Daniel was perfectly complacent in the midst of the wild animals, God having closed their mouths, exerting creatorial power on the behalf of His servant. What a God!

Daniel was concerned about the interests of God. Three times as he bowed his knees day by day, opening his window towards Jerusalem. I am sure he was not always praying for personal help and encouragement, he was throwing out his heart's desire that the people of God would no longer be bound in captivity, but be led out of captivity to God's centre, to enjoy God's thoughts as He had purposed for His people. I believe that would be the main burden of Daniel's prayers as he bowed his knees in the presence of God, for God to come in in this way. And God maintained the rights of His servant. When other kings died, Daniel continued and prospered (5:31, 6:1-3). The change of the ruling dynasty made no difference at all to Daniel's life, he went on smoothly continuing to do the things that pleased God. What a man he was! This again was the result of his prayer life, the righteousness that was in his life and his desire for the furthering of the interests of God. These were the things that sustained him and they came to evidence in a remarkable way.

Another point is that Daniel kneeled when he prayed. Oh, if we have time, kneel. Let us bend our knees in the presence of the supreme majesty of God, and indicate our reverence towards Him. However great the blessings He has given to us, we are still creatures, and failing ones at that. Oh, what a privilege to physically bow our knees, indicating that we recognise the supremacy, the greatness, and the glory of God.

Recently I had the privilege of being in Germany and Holland and what a sight it was to see 900 brothers and sisters bowing their knees when it was time for prayer. It touched my heart. Oh that this reverence might mark us. Here it is individual, but there is no reason it should not be collective when the situation is suitable. C.H.Mackintosh felt that not bowing the knee was an indication of irreverence when there was opportunity to do so, that it was showing a casual attitude in the presence of the great and glorious God, who is infinitely beyond us.[1] This kneeling in prayer is a physical action that indicates a recognition of the supremacy and greatness of the eternal God.

Have you ever felt compelled to bow the knee? I do not mean compelled by power, but compelled because you feel it is the right thing to do to bow the knee. It may be a casual attitude to begin with, but the Lord says, 'No. There must be nothing casual in my presence. Bow down in the acknowledgement of my supremacy'. And we have good examples, supremely, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, as we see Him kneeling in the garden of Gethsemane. Bowed down with the weight of the approaching cross and all that that meant, He kneeled and He prayed (Luke 22:41). Paul (Acts 20:36), Solomon (2 Chronicles 6:13), Ezra (Ezra 9:5) and many others bowed their knees in the presence of God or of Christ.

Finally, "he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks". Daniel was a captive, having no liberty. He may have had a good position, yet he was not privileged to go back to his country and his people and share in all that that country stood for, yet still he prayed and gave thanks, acknowledging the situation that was upon him and his people as the just judgment of a holy God, thankful that he could still enjoy this happy communion with his God. Oh, my dear friends, this is a tremendous lesson, this private attitude of prayer on the part of Daniel. I ask myself, as I will ask you, do we spend sufficient time in prayer? Oh, that Daniel's example may stimulate us privately, and in our homes, and in the prayer meeting. Here is Daniel praying privately, but we may extend this attitude to our prayers in our homes and in the meetings. It was a joy this morning to bow my knees with the couple I am staying with and to cover many interests in prayer. Thank God for homes where husband and wife (and children too, if possible) bow down together in this family attitude of prayer, being a settled matter that nothing puts aside (unless something extraordinary happens with which the Lord would appreciate and have sympathy with). And when the young are brought up in the attitude of prayer, as they get older it is a simple thing to continue. Collectively, prayer is the power of our assemblies, specific prayers for specific needs, and not only in connection with the company, but in international matters too.

I want to go over very briefly the things that I think would mark Daniel in his prayer as he opened his window towards Jerusalem. First of all, he would be occupied with the land, depopulated because of the unfaithfulness of the nation. It was a good land, a land that flowed with milk and honey, but there was something greater than that, it was God's land, "The land is mine" (Leviticus 25:23), and in sovereign goodness He gave it to the nation of Israel, not because they were greater and better than any other nation (indeed they were smaller than the other nations - Deuteronomy 7:7), but He gave it to them as a gift. It was the inheritance, and all God's thoughts were centred in that land, and Daniel would pray for it. Then, specifically Daniel would pray for Jerusalem because God's name and all God's interests were placed there, and Daniel would pray specifically for the house that was built where His name was (2 Chronicles 6:12). And finally Daniel would pray for the name of Jehovah Himself. Think of these things, the land, the city, the house and the name. I believe these things would characterise the prayers of Daniel. But then you say, 'That is all historical. What does it mean for us today?' I believe it means a lot. We sang together and we prayed together at the start of the meeting about the salvation of precious souls, never let us forget this in our prayers. How much we need it, but there is something that is greater than that, and that is the rights of God according to His revealed will in His word. God has indicated how Christians should gather together to the name of the Lord Jesus (Matthew 18:20), without any human organisation, without anything to direct them in the sense of authority as far as man is concerned. God has given precise instructions regarding these things. Today the church is His

'land' and His people brought to Him through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ is where His interests are centred. There is an administration of love in the Headship of Christ and in the power and service of the Holy Spirit, and there precisely is where Christ is to be found "where two or three are gathered together in [His] name" (Matthew 18:20). I believe this is what the land, the city, the house and the name represent for us today. These are the things that have been attacked by the power of the enemy, but in Christ all these things are secure and can never be overthrown.

What we want to see in these last days is an increase of interest in relation to gathering to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, without any human organisation whatsoever, because it is not necessary where the Headship of Christ is in operation, where every member of the body is subject to the direction of the Head, where the Holy Spirit has free direction to move amongst His people to guide them, to direct them and to inspire them and where we are all governed by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; everything is done and said in consistency with that great and glorious name. Is that too much to hope for in these last days?, not if we are obedient, not if we accept the word of God as our guide, not if we are prepared to subject our own wills to the will of God as revealed in His precious word. It is not only an ideal, it is a glorious possibility, and what a wonder it would be if it did come to pass, that in the last days before the church period closes there might be a revival of interests and enthusiasm in these wonderful truths so that when the Lord does come He will find those who are faithful to His word.

Well, the wicked men came to Daniel and found him praying. Their actions in banning prayer to anyone other than king Darius did not interrupt Daniel in his prayers, he kept on praying to God. The time then came when they arrested him and put him into the den of lions, and we know the rest of the story, God looked after his servant.

5. The Collective Prayer Life of Daniel

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"Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would show the king the interpretation. Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret: that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: and he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: he revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter." (Daniel 2:16-23) When king Nebuchadnezzar had a remarkable dream, he wanted it interpreted. He refused to give the astrologers, the soothsayers and the wise men any encouragement, 'No,' he said, 'you tell me the dream and the interpretation too'. That was a very hard thing to do, and when there was no interpretation forthcoming or no telling forth of the dream, the king ordered the execution of all the wise men, and that included Daniel and his three companions. So they came together in fellowship in prayer. It was not now a private matter, this was a matter of fellowship. Daniel made the situation known to the three young men. The names of these men had been changed, they had been given Babylonish names by the Babylonians who connected them with heathen gods, but the Spirit of God recorded for us here their Jewish names that indicated their connection with the living God. These men got together and prayed about the matter, they had fellowship in prayer, and the dream was made known to Daniel. It is a wonderful note of praise and worship that Daniel then gave to this great God, because He was the God who could do things. Oh, that we might get this into our souls, that God can change things, God can bring about a better condition, God can give wisdom, understanding and power, provided that we acknowledge and obey Him, provided that we are prepared to say, 'Our lives are yours', whether individually or collectively.

I remember passing by a church and a poster was displayed outside, and it struck me very much, it said, 'Do not let God be the spare wheel'. A spare wheel is only used in an emergency. This is not the kind of God we want, we want a God who is at the steering wheel, the One who takes control, the One who directs, to whom we are subject. So Daniel and his three companions prayed together and God gave the answer, revealing to Daniel the dream that the king had, and also the interpretation of it.

I want you to notice the kind of answer that Daniel gave to God for this revelation. "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his". This was virtually Daniel saying to God, 'This is a simple matter for you'. The dream was revealed and the interpretation given. What

an instant answer this was to the prayer.

Then he went on to say, "He changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings". Kings may be powerful, mighty and strong, boasting in their strength, their armies and their wealth, but God can remove a king overnight and replace him with another as he did in Daniel 5:30-31. Oh, how small man is in the presence of God! What power He has! We see in the Bible and in history how boastful man is, setting himself up in all his arrogance and pride saying he will do this and that, but God changes it overnight. This is the kind of God that we believe in.

"He revealeth the deep and secret things". If we just apply this in connection with our own lives and in our companies, are we resigned to the fact that there can be no improvement? Are we resigned to the fact that in our individual lives there is no possibility of getting more power, or more spiritual progress? Do we acquiesce in the weakness and failure that is there or do we trust in the living God, because He can change things? He can change things for us individually, and he can change the conditions in localities. This is the kind of God that Daniel had. Are we prepared to pay the price in prayer, giving up more time to pray and when God reveals His will to us, are we ready to obey?

6. Daniels Prayer of Confession

Daniel's Prayer of Confession

"In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; in the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: and I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land..... And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; yea, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved; therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision." (Daniel 9:1-6; Daniel 9:20-23)

Very often when we are praying we are quite unaware of what is going on. At the same time as Daniel was praying, God was working on the spirit of Cyrus. Cyrus was giving instructions as to the return from Babylon of a section of the people who were held in bondage. The king was giving a decree that the people could move out from captivity and go back to Jerusalem. Daniel did not know this, but one thing he did know was that God had said precisely that after 70 years of captivity, there would be a remnant returning. Daniel knew this from the book of Jeremiah (25:11). This indicates to us that that book was in circulation then, Daniel read it and he knew God's mind.

There is a principle for us immediately. Do we know God's mind? How are we going to get it, from the philosophers of this world? It is not there. There is one source where we can find it, that is in God's word, not the law as it pertains to Israel, not even the history of Israel and the lessons that we learn there, but in the New Testament, where it specifically speaks of the Christian's position in this world, the privileges and the responsibilities. This is where we learn God's mind, and as we learn it and seek grace to obey it then the blessing of God comes. So immediately Daniel knew that the time had arrived. He had always been in accord with the mind of God, but now he knew that a specific moment had arrived, and so he set his face with earnest diligence to pray to God about this specific matter.

It is beautiful that he started his prayer with wholehearted confession. He did not exclude himself, he did not specifically blame others, but he took an overall view of the picture, the absolute failure

and weakness, and he freely acknowledged to God that this was the case. Along with that he knew that God was a merciful God, a forgiving God, a God who had not deviated from His covenant with Israel, a God who was ready to bless, ready to forgive, ready to hear. We have not time to enter into the specific details of the prayer, I commend the study to you, but the thread that is running through is 'We have sinned, we have done wickedly, we have failed, we have been unfaithful'.

I want to ask this company, individually, would any of us dare to stand up and say that we have not failed? I do not think so. And I can assure you I would immediately take my place along with you if you stand up and say that you have failed. I have failed. I regret that. Every failure of ours, morally, ecclesiastically, or any other way adversely affects the Christian testimony. Do not let us think that we can sin or fail in any way whatsoever with impunity. It is a definite truth that our failure affects the Christian witness in this world. This is very solemn. We might think, 'Well, I do not do this, and I do not do that', and we might pat ourselves on the back and say, 'Well, I have not failed' (I am talking individually), but oh, my dear friends, let us examine ourselves in the light of God's presence. This is the measuring stick, just to be in God's presence. Let us tell Him that we have not failed, and see what He says to us. Oh, what a solemn thing it is to be in the presence of God! So when we consider the weakness of the Christian position do not let us blame others. Daniel said, 'I confess my sin'. And having confessed our sin, let us look for understanding to follow the right way and to follow the word of God, that there might be better conditions. Oh, what a prayer it was, and God answered by addressing Daniel as "Oh, man, greatly beloved". Daniel was a man whose heart was yearning for the prosperity of God's interests first.

Notice that Daniel said, "the kings have failed". Who are the kings? (I am now referring to the Christian company). They are the persons who are leaders, the persons who should tell forth the mind of God without any partiality; the kings are to enforce the word of God. I do not use the word enforcing in the sense that there are leaders who say, 'You must do this or you must do that', I mean enforcing by presenting the word of God to the people of God, and what it means to do the will of God in our day. Daniel said, 'Our kings have failed'. Is this true of the Christian profession as we know it? I think it is true. Then consider the princes, the influential men amongst the people of God, the men who occupy places given to them by God. We often read in the book of Numbers of princes brought forward as persons who are given direction by God to accomplish things for Him. The princes have failed. Not only have the princes and rulers failed, but the people have also - individually, every one of us. Peter was certainly a king. He failed, he led the saints astray, so that even Barnabas was carried away by assimilation (Galatians 2:11-14). When we view the history of the revival over 150 years ago, and we see the break-up by continual departure from the truth, we must bow our heads in shame. We say, 'How well it could have been if the truth had been preserved.' And all must bear responsibility for the failure. The failure in Daniel's day did not happen just at the time that Daniel was at Babylon, and the declension that we are facing today just did not happen overnight, and the reason is very simple, the word of God has been neglected. 'We have not listened to the prophets' said Daniel. 'When the word of God was proclaimed in clearness and in power nobody paid any attention, they were so occupied with their own affairs instead of listening to the word of God'. Covetousness was seen in Achan as they entered into the land (Joshua 7:1-26), a desire for materialism, and also, at the beginning of the church period, in Ananias and Saphira (Acts 5:1-42), and then a complete ignoring of the word of God as to

gathering together and following the principles connected with it. We cannot wonder that God's chastising hand is upon us. So, let us confess, let us take this attitude of humiliation upon us. If we can, then this meeting will not have been in vain. It is not a case of looking over our shoulder at someone else, but of taking it home to our own consciences, our own hearts, and working it out in humility before God.

I want to tell you a story by way of encouragement, to show how we can make things better. When I was in Germany I was introduced to a young man and he was described to me as a brilliant student. I was told the different things he was interested in, and he had been breaking bread for about a year amongst the brethren. His parents were practising agnostics. I asked how it was that he found his way amongst brethren, and I was told a story that touched my heart, and that is why I am passing it on to you. When he was at college he noticed a young woman who was different. He watched her carefully and he had to acknowledge she was different, different in appearance and different in her habits. So at last his curiosity got the better of him and he asked her 'Why is it that you are different? I notice that your hair is different from the others, and I notice too that your clothes are different from the others.'

'Well,' she said, 'I am a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.'

'Oh,' he said, 'Are you compelled then to do this?'

'Oh, no,' she said, 'I do it because I love the Lord Jesus.' And that was the means of his conversion. Conversion can not only come about by campaigns (thank God for them), but salvation can come about in a person's life by faithfulness to the Lord. That young lad is going on, he is making advances in his spiritual life, he has seen faithfulness, it was the means of his conversion and it is governing him in his life. Dear brethren, young and old, oh that the Lord might help us to be faithful! We will influence those who are beside us and we will influence them in the right direction. May the Lord help us then to be more and more exercised in this tremendous matter of prayer. The right attitude, the right desire, and the kind of life that gives power to our prayers, as we wait for the Lord to see Him face to face.

Frank Wallace

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