

# Daniel - the Man of Prayer

by William Fitch

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer in the life of Daniel and how it can be applied to our own lives, highlighting the need for penitential, intercessory, and creative prayer.*

**Duration:** 38:57

**Scripture:** Daniel 9:3

**Topics:** "Daniel"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of prayer and the need for diligent practice in order to become proficient in it. He compares prayer to other arts, emphasizing that it requires consistent effort and dedication. The story of Daniel is used as an example of someone who demonstrated unwavering faith and trust in God through his commitment to prayer. The speaker encourages listeners to recognize the Holy Spirit's call to develop a similar level of faith and ministry through prayer.

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## Transcript

And before the message, shall we lift our hearts again? O Thou by whom we come to God, the life, the truth, the way, the path of prayer Thyself hast trod, Lord, teach us how to pray. For Thy great name's sake. Amen.

This is going to be the last in our present series of studies from the book of Daniel. Next Sunday, God willing, I want to commence a series of studies of the cross of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. These will be seven messages leading right up to Easter.

I believe that they will be under God, and as you and I together pray, true means of grace and blessing. Continually, we do need to ask, Jesus, keep me near the cross. That's what we're going to try and do during these coming weeks.

God, if you'd make these services known, we'll be thinking next Sunday morning about the cross, God's eternal purpose. And after that, there's various branches of the study of the fellowship of Calvary. And now, this morning, the sense in which we want to sum up many of the things that we have been saying concerning Daniel, and in particular, we would take two verses as our text in the ninth chapter of the book of the prophet Daniel, verses three and four.

I set my face unto the Lord God to seek with prayer and supplications with fasting and sackcloth and ashes, and I prayed unto the Lord my God and made my confession. I'm sure that as we have studied the life of Daniel during these past weeks, we've noted a singular luster and nobility and stately distinction about this man of God. There's a particular note of high breeding and aristocracy about Daniel's name and character.

There's never at any time anything common or conventional in anything that Daniel says or does. There is, as has so eloquently been said by a devout student of this man, there is a refinement and reserve and high sculpture in everything about him. And we have seen this in many ways, not least in his self-control, self-denial at the king's table.

In our earliest meeting with him in the first chapter, we saw him resolving not to defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank. Amidst the idolatry, the self-indulgence, the indecency and the riot of the young men of the palace, Daniel determined with his band to abstain altogether, and that from the beginning. And in this, his virtue and temperance and self-control shine out so clearly.

And yet at the same time, in the life and character of Daniel, there was nothing morose or melancholy. On the contrary, we're expressly told that he washed his face and he anointed his head and he walked amongst the rest with a countenance that declared that his faith and hope were in God above. We've seen how Daniel became learned in all the wisdom and studies of the ancient world.

But better still, we have seen him how he was taught by the Spirit of God and instructed in the good and perfect will of God. We have seen how the secret of the Lord was revealed to him and how he was thereby able to direct the destinies of empire. So much so that Daniel came to be a famous and proverbial name in all the literature of the time and subsequent literature.

Why, Ezekiel the prophet, a contemporary of Daniel, has heard so much about the wisdom of Daniel that to a proud enemy of Israel he exclaims in irony, thou art wiser than Daniel. At different points of the story, it's clearly indicated that in Daniel, God matched the hour with the man. And through various reigns, he continued witnessing faithfully to the truth.

And in them all, he is always seen as a strong and courageous and wholehearted and loyal servant of his God. But that isn't all. We have seen him try, attempt.

Others of his company have also passed through the fiery flames. But Daniel likewise is marked for liquidation, as we read this morning. The story of Daniel in the lion's den is a very wonderful record of the sovereignty of God and of God's ceaseless care for his child.

A very wonderful story indeed of the way in which God remembers his own and will not cast them off. But it was also for Daniel a very terrible test. It was a very terrible test of his strength and trust and confidence.

He knew as he entered that cave of the lions that many of God's servants before him had suffered martyrdom, and for him this might well be the hour of his own departure. But God delivered him then. He stopped the mouths of the lions and let his child go free.

And all this is the story of Daniel. And you and I will be singularly blind and deaf if we don't see and recognize that in all this, the Holy Spirit is calling us to a like quality of faith and ministry. For Daniel, exceptional as he undoubtedly is, is nonetheless a pattern of what God can do with any life, and a pattern

of the life that God longs to see in all his children.

We may not be called to such exalted station and ministry as Daniel was. We won't. Possibly we will not be asked to stand before rulers and governors and kings as a testimony to our faith.

That doesn't matter. Each of us in our own sphere have a life to live, and a part to play, and a fight to fight, and a victory to win. And Daniel therefore must teach us, and we must let Daniel remind us that for us all, victory is possible.

We must continually let Daniel remind us that through Christ we can do all things, all things that God wants us and expects us to do, we can do. We must let Daniel constantly remind us that by the Holy Spirit's power, we too may be more than conquerors, and at the end may win the well-fought day. But if that is to be, there's one supreme lesson that we must learn of Daniel.

We must learn from him what true prayer is. For whatever else Daniel did, he certainly prayed. He was a man who under the discipline and direction of the Holy Spirit became amazingly proficient in prayer as the years rolled by.

It was as a man of prayer that he became wise. It was as a man of prayer that he was able to read the signs of the times and unlock the scroll of history. It was as a man of prayer that he was able to stand before kings undismayed.

It was as a man of prayer that he was able to speak so powerfully for God when all other voices were dumb. Prayer made Daniel, Daniel. Daniel just doesn't happen.

Daniel is formed and fashioned, forged. Prayer, prayer crowned his life with integrity and with authority and with spirituality. He prayed much.

Why was it that he was cast into the lion's den? It was because he was a man of prayer. Remember, when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being opened in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God as he did before time. Then the next verse, then the men assembled and they found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.

They found him praying. That's why he was cast into the lion's den. It was because he was a man of prayer that he was tried and tested as he was.

That's the story all through the story. We find that supremely in chapter nine. The greatest chapter of them all.

Undoubtedly one of the greatest chapters in all the Bible. The ninth chapter of the book of the prophet Daniel is a chapter to read and read and read and read again, get back to it, continue it. It's all a record of Daniel at prayer.

This is an apparel with Abraham pleading for love, with David pouring out his heart and deepest confession in the 51st Psalm, with our Lord interceding for his church in John 17, the great high priestly prayer. And it's in the ninth chapter of the book that you see the real stature of Daniel. For never forget the real stature of a man is measured when he's on his knees.

That's when God measures him. He prayed. He prayed always, never stopped praying.

And don't think he came to that proficiency in prayer by any easy road. For there's no easy way to this kind of power in prayer. Only by constant and unremitting and enterprising practice is this one.

See, even our Lord himself couldn't teach his disciples to pray unless they wanted to be taught. And in this holy art, every man must teach himself, and that every day he lives. This most personal, most secret, most experimental of all the arts.

I've been thinking during the past week about the Kiwanis musical festival. It's so interesting just to read the reports. You see the record of success and failure.

But behind all this story of this past week, think of the practice, the unremitting and zealous and eager questing after success. You don't become a pianist without practice. You can't play a violin without hard work.

Many give up their practice and therefore give up their playing. And you know the same is true of prayer. There's no royal road.

There's no shortcut. There's no easy way to proficiency in prayer. It's like all the other arts, because this is the greatest of them.

Greater than all the arts that you have mastered is prayer. This study must be early begun and assiduously continued, or else you will be a bungler at it all your days. When I came to this point in my preparation, I came to certain words of Dr. Alexander White, which I want to quote.

It's a long quote, but it's vital to this message. He's talking about Daniel, and he's talking about Daniel as a man of prayer. And he says, you must have special and extraordinary seasons of prayer as Daniel had over and above his daily habit of prayer.

Special and extraordinary, original and unparalleled seasons of prayer, when you literally do nothing else day nor night but pray. You must pray in your very dreams till you will come at last to live and move and have your whole being in prayer. You cannot, of course, teach this to a man who detests the very thought of prayer, but Daniel wanted to be taught.

The yoke he had to bear in his youth taught him to long to pray, to be arrested in his father's home by Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers, to have Babylonian chains put on his hands and feet, to see the towers of Zion for the last time. That's the kind of thing that makes a man to pray, and that would have taught you to pray long ago. You would have been having prayer meetings with your class fellows and with your companions if you had come through the half that Daniel and his three companions came through.

So Alexander White, are his words too strong? If you think so, let me tell you he's only beginning. Let me quote just a bit more. It is because you are not being emptied from vessel to vessel that we never see you at the prayer meeting.

Even as Jeremiah, that great authority on why some men pray and why other men never pray, has this about you in his book. More hath been at ease from his youth. He has settled on his lease.

He has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity, and therefore his taste remaineth in him, and his scent is not changed. Thus Alexander White, from the pulpit of Free St. George's, Edinburgh, thus he preached to his people, preached in such a way that out of that church there

went church leaders who went to the ends of the earth for the gospel, men and women who established the church in strength in their own land. God give us more and more men and women like this, and may God give to us men and women who will begin to hunger and to thirst after this fellowship, this kind of fellowship, this, this losing of themselves in God.

Daniel was of this spirit, and to us all that comes the word of our master, watch and pray. What were the marks of Daniel's prayer? Oh, here is a great and wealthy subject, but I want to suggest to you first of all that at the heart of all his praying there were penitential prayers. Let me read from the ninth chapter of the third verse.

And I set my face unto the Lord to seek by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. And I prayed unto the Lord my God and made my confession and said, O Lord, great and dreadful God, keeping 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, who speak in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces as at this day to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and unto all Israel who are near and are far off through all the countries where thou hast driven them because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.

To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, for we have rebelled against him. Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God to walk in his laws which he set before us by his servants, the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law even by departing that they might not obey thy voice.

Penitence, penitence. Have we lost this note? Is it possible that when we kneel to pray we scarcely believe that we have really sinned? Is it possible that when we come to the place of prayer we scarcely know that we have grieved the Holy Ghost? Is it not one of the distinctive characteristics of an impotent and a powerless church that there is so little sense of sin, so little of the sense of conviction of sin at the heart of the congregation? Yet if we would only think about our sin, about our sins of temper, about our sins of tongue, about the sin of the coldness of our heart, about the sin of the lovelessness of our life, about the sin of the impotence of our testimony, the sin of the prayerlessness of our spirit, the sin of evil speech, covetousness, and envy, of the sin of slander, the sin of pride. Let us remember that the first two Beatitudes are these, blessed are the poor in spirit.

And secondly, blessed are they that mourn. What does that mean? It's the mourning of deep conviction. It's the mourning of realizing that in ourselves we are nothing.

It's the mourning of realization that we ourselves are only sinners saved by grace, and that to the end of the chapter we're going to carry this story of sin with us. You see, Paul himself, that amazing man of God, Paul himself could declare to the church, I know that in me dwelleth no good thing, no good thing. Constantly our prayer should be the prayer of the ankh and prayer book.

Remember, O Lord, that which thou hast wrought in us, another we ourselves deserve. Confession. Confession for iniquity.

Daniel confessed. Confession for wickedness. Daniel confessed that.

Confession for rebellion. Daniel confessed that. Confession for departure from the precepts.

Daniel confesses that. Confession for not listening to the voice of the prophets and the preachers whom God has sent. That's what Daniel mentions as he prays.

This is penitential prayer, but only the Holy Spirit can grant this to us. Nothing that I can do, nothing that any man can do, can persuade a man that he's a sinner. It's the work of the Holy Ghost.

It's only God, the Holy Ghost, who can bring a church to need and penitence. It's only God, the Holy Ghost, who can show to us how far we have wandered from his precepts and commandments. I tell you, God, the Holy Spirit today will all but reveal to us the exceeding sinfulness of our sinful hearts.

The more a penitence, the more a real prayer. Oh, one could speak of this at length, but I tell you, dear, dear friends here in Knox, sometimes I get more than concerned. But the sense of pride so manifest in different parts of this church fellowship, the sense of belonging, the sense that this is ours and this is ours.

What hast thou, thou hast not received? All is of God, is all of his mercy, is it not? Do we merely belong to Christ, or are we ourselves our own? I wonder. I wonder. But I am certain of this, that it's time that the Spirit of God was shuffled to work in some of your hearts and mine, as never before.

In order that in the midst of this twentieth century and our generation, we may recognize the signs of the times, and know that it's only as we go down with God, that men are going to be brought up to God. Only thus, only then, only then, I think back to our annual business meeting. Now, I pondered long as to whether I should say this or not, but at this point, you'll forgive me if I'm--God will forgive it if it shouldn't be said.

I think it should. I went home from our annual business meeting, I must confess, just terribly depressed. Reports thank God for work being done, but oh, I tell you, I hungered and I thirsted to see more of the spirit of the Beatitudes in these reports, more of a broken and a contrite heart, more of a spirit that was willing to say we have failed utterly.

How many of the reports of this past year were able to give the glory to God for souls that had been saved? How many? How many? How many? Penitence. I set my face to the Lord to seek by prayer with frosting and sackcloth and ashes, and I prayed to the Lord, and I made my confession. And somehow I know that we're not going to see, we can't expect to see, God exalted in our fellowship until somehow or another of his great grace we're brought to this point.

Do you note that there was not only penitential prayer, there was intercessory prayer. Intercessory prayer. Oh Lord, verse 16, according to all thy righteousness I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain, because for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers Jerusalem and thy people have become a reproach.

Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant and his supplication and cause thy face to shine upon the sanctuary that's desolate. For the Lord's sake, O my God, incline thine ear and ear. Open thine eyes and behold our desolations.

O Lord, hear. O Lord, forgive. O Lord, hearken and do.

Defer not, for thine own name's sake. O my God, for thy city and thy people are called by thy name. What's he doing? He's interceding.

He's standing before God and he's praying for Jerusalem, for the city of Jerusalem, for the sanctuary of the people of God. He's praying that the desolations of the sanctuary will be removed. He's interceding.

That's the call that comes to us, to pray for the Church. Prayers and supplications to be made for all men, especially for them that are of the household of faith. Intercessory prayer.

You say I can't do that. You say I find prayer meetings upsetting. Do you? Well, may the Lord upset you more.

Have you told the Lord that? Have you really sought his face? You see, I can't pray. You can't. Have you no words? This is from Redemption Psalms.

Have you no words? Ah, think again. Words flow apace when you complain and fill your fellow sufferers' ears. Was the sad tale of all your cares, where half the breath thus vainly spent to heaven in supplication sent, your cheerful song would oftener be, see what the Lord has done for me.

Intercession is the highest ministry which the human spirit is capable. All my people suffer the word of reproach and of rebuke. Suffer this word which I know is given by the Holy Ghost to your heart today.

Isn't it time, isn't it time that we all as a congregation began just to discover something more of this? Isn't it time? Penitential prayer, intercessory prayer, but also creative prayer. Blaise Pascal asks a question, why has God established prayer? He gives three answers. But the first of the three is this, in order to communicate to his creatures the dignity of causality.

What does that mean? In order to make us like himself in power of creation. That's what prayer does. Every great movement of God can be traced back to a kneeling figure.

No movement of God ever began outside a place of prayer. Daniel knew that. Daniel set himself to create deliverance for Judah.

And I believe that the wheels of history are ordered by God in his sovereignty, so that Cyrus will rise, and Cyrus rises and fills the earth, and behind all that curtain of history is a man of prayer. The man of faith, the man of prayer, who determines history under God. Note, his prayer was heard.

He didn't speak into the void. He didn't speak into an empty heaven. He spoke into the heart of God.

So we read, verse 20, 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. Yes, just as I was speaking in prayer, 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 come forth to give thee skill and understanding.

And he says this, 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. In other words, praying time is never wasted time. True prayer is always creation.

In prayer, there is given to us the dignity of causality. And it is possible that as we kneel to pray, as we meet as a congregation to pray, that out from our hearts and lives, there will go streams of blessing. New life will arise.

You win souls by prayer. As you pray, souls leap to life, liberated. As you pray, hearts are led.

And as you pray, bondages of the captive church are broken, and they move forward. Victory, an open heaven, power with God, are granted unto all who pray. So, would you like this morning, as we close our service, to look up into the eyes of the Lord, and pray this prayer.

Lord, will you teach me to pray? Would you like to pray that prayer this morning? Really mean it? Even me, Lord, teach me. And it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, when he was ended, one of the disciples asked, Lord, teach us to pray. And, O Master, as thou art praying in a certain place now, even interceding at the throne of grace, for thy church, some of us here, at least this morning, would like to repeat this prayer.

Lord, teach me, even me, and the glory shall be thine forever, and ever, and ever. Amen.

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