**DANIEL’S LIFE OF PRAYER**

August 27, 2017

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.”

The name Daniel has three syllables and each one in Hebrew has a meaning. “Dan” means “judge”. The little “ee” sound (i) means “my.” And “el” means “God.” So Daniel’s name means “God is my judge.” Daniel lived up to his name in a most remarkable way. He lived a life that shouted the truth: “God is my judge, not man!” “God is my judge, and no king of Babylon or Persia!” “God is my judge” means “What God thinks and what God does matters more than what anybody else in the world thinks or does.” That is the way I want St. George UBF to be in the new academic year. What God thinks of St. George UBF and what God does at St. George UBF is more important than what anybody else thinks or anybody else does. Today’s passage is an amazing testimony to the daring, defiant, disciplined prayer life of Daniel. As we read this passage, we are filled with longing to be courageous in prayer like Daniel. It makes us want to be daring in prayer, and if necessary defiant against earthly powers in prayer, and disciplined in prayer.

I. Political rivals’ conspiracy

After conquering the great Babylonian Empire, King Darius divided his kingdom into 120 states and appointed 120 satraps as vassal kings, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. Daniel was an exile from Judah. But he was a man of God’s wisdom and intelligence and understanding. He worked hard as a good steward and with sincerity and loyalty for the king. To the king’s eyes Daniel was so distinguished among the prime ministers by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the other two prime ministers and the governors became jealous of Daniel. They decided to destroy him. When they tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, they were unable to do so. These men tried to dig up Daniel’s past. They tried to find some past wrong doing, or mismanagement, abuse or affair or something or anything to bring a charge against him. Perhaps they could find something in the internet search history. But they could not find anything against him. Finally, they said, ‘We will never find any basis for charge against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.’”

Look at verses 6-9. They went as a group to the king and said, “The king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions’ den.” This decree greatly flattered the king’s ego and sense of pride. He could feel that his rule would be strengthened from this edict. He could also feel like he was even like a god from this edict. There was nothing in this decree that King Darius did not like. So he said, “That sounds good to me. Let’s do it and put it in writing.” However, King Darius had no idea of the motivation behind this decree, that it was directly aimed at personally destroying Daniel. This time was another great trial and testing of Daniel’s faith and his obedience. Should he obey the decree or obey God?

II. Daniel’s prayer

What did Daniel do in this situation? Look at verse 10, “Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened towards Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as had done before.” Recall that Daniel is right on the brink of being promoted to the main ruler over Persia. Think of all the rationalizations that must have rushed to his head—“my influence would be so great if I held that position … I can do more for God alive than dead … it’s only thirty days, and then I can pray again.” But he rejected all the rationalizations. He knew the law. He knew the penalty. And he went to pray.

Firstly, he did not go to the woods to pray; he went to his house. He could have kept on praying to his God without putting himself at risk if he had just gone underground for thirty days. There is no law that says you have to pray in your house where your enemies will be looking for you. Secondly, he did not go to the secret inner chamber of his house. He went to the room with windows (open windows)—the one in the second story of the house, the one most visible, the one that faced Jerusalem and not the palace in Babylon. Daniel is defiant. Daniel is not just praying contrary to the king’s decree. He is making a public statement. In modern terms, he is doing an act of public civil disobedience. And he is doing so in a public way that no biblical law requires. Thirdly, he did not pray once, early in the morning when no one might be looking, but three times a day and every day. He would make sure that he is not missed in his refusal to obey this law. Fourthly, he did not change the way he prayed or do anything different to yield to the pressures of the law Darius had made. It says at the end of the verse that he prayed “just as he had done before.” There were many ways to pray that might not have been detected and that would have fulfilled the law of his God. But Daniel prayed daringly, defiantly and in his usual disciplined way of three times a day.

How can we imitate Daniel in our life of prayer today? First, Daniel was making a statement, not just about God but about his relation to God. God would not have changed if Daniel had prayed in secret. God would still be God. Daniel would still be a ruler in Persia. What would have been different is the way the kings and satraps thought about Daniel’s relationship to God. And when Daniel thought about that, he could not bring himself to go underground. He was known as a man who lived by prayer—whose life was built on prayer—who consulted his God in all things and who sought the action of his God before he took action himself. Daniel would not surrender that testimony. I pray that we won’t surrender that testimony either. May prayer week—our fasting, our morning prayer, our night of prayer—be a resounding testimony to God’s glory and to our life and our church being built on prayer!

Second, Daniel’s prayer was disciplined and regular. When the time came for a demonstration. Daniel did not have to change anything. He already was praying three times a day in a stated place. There was pattern and routine and discipline. In Korea, early morning prayer is very common. But in Canada, early morning prayer meetings are almost non-existent in churches. Could it be that Daniel’s discipline in prayer was the secret of his faith and courage? I urge you to take time this week to step back and plan some discipline into your prayer life? Be like Daniel. In particular, Clubs day is approaching. We need to prepare it through much prayer.

Third, prayer is more precious than life. Daniel knew that the penalty for praying would be the lion’s den. I don’t think Daniel knew that he would be delivered any more than Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego knew it as they stood before the fiery furnace and said, “Even if he does not deliver us, we will not serve your gods.” (Daniel 3:18) This must mean that prayer is more important than life. Daniel would rather pray than save his life. Not praying was a worse prospect to Daniel than being eaten by lions. That is a radical commitment to prayer. Just think of it. Can you say with Daniel: “You will have to take my life before you take my prayer”?

III. Daniel was saved from the lion’s den

When his political rivals found Daniel praying and asking God for help at his house, they went to the king and reminded him of his royal decree, saying, “Daniel, one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, nor to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day.” When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him (12-14). The political opponents waited and waited for the king’s order to throw Daniel into the den of lions. But the king was very hesitant until sundown. Then they pressed the king by saying, “Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed” (15). King Darius realized that he made a big mistake for signing the law. He was greatly distressed but he gave in. However, he said, “May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!” It is remarkable that this pagan king would encourage Daniel like that. It is beautiful to see how even unbelievers will sometimes pick up on the faith and morals of consistent believers whom they observe at close hand. Only too often Christians fail their unsaved friends and relatives by not having as high standards of faith and practice as the world expects from God’s people.

Now Daniel was thrown into the den of lions. Then his political opponents brought a big stone and placed it 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 (17). Daniel’s political opponents thought his bones were crushed by hungry lions. They assumed that they won the victory. They were sadistic. But the king was different. The king was suffering from a thorn of conscience. He returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep. Historically, most kings had drinking parties and various kinds of entertainment during the nighttime in order to forget about the things of the world. In truth, they drank, not to please themselves, but to get some sleep. Probably most kings were drunkards. But King Darius could not sleep because he was pricked by a thorn of conscience. He was greatly distressed that he could not rescue a man of God, Daniel.

At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions’ den. When he came near the den, 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?” Daniel answered, “May the 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.” This is Daniel’s life testimony. In his life testimony, he says God sent his angel and protected him from the mouths of the lions and they did not hurt him. The lions were very hungry. They wanted to eat him up. But they could not do so because the angel of God shut their mouths and took all the strength away from their bodies. Also the angel of God gave them beautiful smiles. Daniel made friends with the gorgeous lions and smiling lionesses. When they slept, Daniel also slept.

When Daniel trusted God, God saved him. Look at verse 23. “The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.” Sometimes in our life we face many lions. At work, our boss can appear to be a lion or our coworkers at work can appear to be like lions. They want to eat us up and devour us and crush us. We want to avoid them and are afraid to face them. Sometimes our teachers can appear to be like lions, too. But we learn here how to overcome the lions. We must trust in God by praying like Daniel. Then God will deliver us when we pray with faith like Daniel. We should not think or say, “I don’t have Daniel’s faith!!” Just remember, the same God we pray to is the same God that rescued Daniel. Is your situation any worse than Daniel’s? God will rescue you and make you strong when you spend time to pray. Remember, the victory is not with men nor from us. The victory comes through faith in Jesus. Psalm 34:19 says, “A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all.”

Daniel’s writing the 6th chapter and his book is saying it was a vindication of his great faith in God. He believed God and God honored his faith. But please do not misunderstand. Believing in God does not mean that God will always save us from the lions. Isaiah believed God, too, but he got sawn in half. Paul believed in God, but he was beheaded. Peter believed in God, and he got crucified upside down. Believing in God doesn’t mean that the lions are not going to eat you. There have been martyrs throughout history who have believed God and yet they have died. The issue is that we accept God’s will. If it is to live, it is to live. If it is to die, it is to die. But in either case, we are never defeated. In fact, if Daniel had been eaten by lions, he would have been in the presence of God, which would have been better than looking up at Darius and saying, “May the king live forever.” He couldn’t lose. We never lose. If he had been torn to shreds, that angel that came would have carried him into the presence of the Lord.

May God make each of us very prayerful so that we may trust in God like Daniel. May God use our crisis and trials as an opportunity for us to come closer to him and pray more to him. May God be glorified through our prayer life. We have been studying the book of Daniel in order to learn the holy and godly life of Daniel. I am so amazed by his consistent life of faith from start to finish. He was virtuous when he was young, and he was virtuous when he was old. This makes Daniel to be useful to God even in his old age. May God bless you to be faithful as prayer servants to the end.