



Our World Needs You ... And Our Prayers

Message notes, September 16, 2018

Daniel 6:1-10

Today we focus on the centrality of prayer in our mission to reach people. Our world needs our prayers.

- Prayer is perhaps our most *under-valued* resource.
- John Wesley once said – “God does nothing on earth apart from prayer.” This may seem overstated, but to be sure, God has sovereignly chosen to involve us in His work and our prayers are fuel for His purposes.
- Like a laser, prayer adds the “wave” of our faith to the “wave” of God’s purposes and promises, thereby releasing His power in our lives and into the world.
- The story of Daniel gives us deep insights into the vitality and power of our prayers:
 - The nation of Israel has been conquered by the Babylonians and taken into exile. Daniel was *selected* from among the Hebrews to be an intern in the Babylonian court. Daniel impresses the king because of his deep convictions, wisdom, and strength. He further impressed the king through his God-given ability to interpret dreams.
 - The king appointed him as one of his top administrators. The other administrators were jealous and sought to undermine Daniel. They could find no “cracks” in his character, so they decided to snare him through his deep faith. They manipulated King Darius into establishing a decree that all should bow down to him any time he passed by. Daniel, devoted to Yahweh alone, would never do this. The penalty was death!

Upon the decree, Daniel deepened his commitment (for this was already his habit) to daily prayer and thanksgiving, three times each day. (Daniel 6:10).

What lessons regarding prayer can we draw from Daniel’s example?

1. **Our prayers should be characterized by DISCIPLINE:** Regular connection with Yahweh in prayer was a steady habit in Daniel’s life. This was surely a primary source of his wisdom and strength.
 - How will we have a meaningful, fruitful life if we don’t invest regular, focused time with God in prayer?
 - Just as thrust-propulsion breaks a rocket away from the earth’s gravity so “prayer is the way we escape the gravitational pull of our flesh (and the world) to enter God’s orbit.” – Mark Batterson, *Circle Maker*
 - The discipline of a regular (daily) time with God, in prayer and His Word, is vital to abiding in Jesus throughout our day(s).
2. **Our prayers should be characterized by a DEFIANCE:** (of the broken, tumultuous or oppressive situations of our lives)
 - Daniel devoted his prayers to “defying” the oppressive scenario - that he must bow to Darius or die. He sought Yahweh in prayer, asking for His wisdom, strength, and blessing. [I speculate that he was essentially praying: “My God, move in this situation on my behalf and for your glory. I trust my life into your hands.”]
 - Daniel 9:17-19 is a model for us of the posture of “defiant” prayer:
 - Daniel prayed in a spirit of repentance and humility.
 - Daniel prayed with great hope in God’s mercy.
 - Daniel prayed with awareness of God’s promise.
 - Jesus gave us a similar prayer guide (Matthew 6:9-10) - “thy kingdom come; thy will be done...”
 - If we are going to be effective in prayer, we need to know, through His Word, what God has said, promised and done.

- Effective prayer begins when we perceive **the GAP** between the way things are (in our broken world and lives) and how God desires them to be. We pray, with faith and hope, into the gaps for God to fill and close them!

Where are there gaps – in your life, in our church, in our city, in the world? Commit to praying into these gaps!

- During the message, Pastor Derrick proclaimed several gaps that call for our faith-filled, “defiant” prayers:
 - God has done much good in us at CCC, but He desires **even more in and through our church** to impact our city: Lifting the banner of racial reconciliation and unity; continuing to engage the harvest of our city in outreach; growing bolder in proclaiming the gospel to those who are “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.)
 - Wholeness and restoration in marriages and families
 - Connection, purpose, and joy among singles
 - Vision and direction for students and young adults
 - Recovery and freedom from hurts, hang-ups and habits

3. Our prayers should be characterized by ENDURANCE:

- Like the “woman before the king” (Luke 18:1-8), will we **persist** in prayer for God to move and fill and close “the gaps?”
- During their exile, Daniel prayed steadfastly for his people and their return to their homeland - **for 60 years!**
- Daniel 10:11-14. Daniel persisted in prayer for 21 days until the angel Michael “came through.”
- Jesus invites us to “keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking.” Matthew 7:7-8
- There is a good tension between persisting and wrestling for God to move *and* listening for His voice and submitting to HIS purposes.

Our part is to endure in prayer, asking God to move in “the gaps” until we see breakthrough OR until God reveals that He is doing something different and releases us (or re-directs us) in our praying.

- Daniel 6:16-23. The rest of the story:

Daniel was arrested for violating the decree and was sentenced to death (which King Darius did NOT want because he respected and valued Daniel, but the King was trapped by his own pride and decree.)

Daniel was cast into a den of lions. Many who have trusted in God have died in lions’ dens (martyred for their faith), and Daniel knew he might die, but he would rather love, honor, and die for his God than bow to another.

But, Daniel was not eaten. He did not die. In fact, there was no scratch on him. Yahweh honored his faithfulness and delivered him, and certainly Daniel’s trusting, persistent prayers were a part of God’s abounding grace to him.

- May we be such people of prayer: **disciplined; defiantly** praying into the gaps of our lives and our world, **enduring** in prayer until our gracious God breaks through (or shows us He is doing something else).