

Daniel 6:10-12 3rd September 2023

Starting a sermon series on prayer...

In these few verses from Daniel, we discover that prayer was the secret weapon in the prophet's arsenal.

Up until this moment, we have not been told much about Daniel's prayer life but we have seen the results of it.

He is full of the Holy Spirit. He is wise. He can interpret dreams and visions better than the wise men of Babylon. He constantly seems to experience spiritual breakthrough.

The closest we have come so far to observing the engine room that powered all of this fruitful ministry was in 2:17–18, where we were told that he called a prayer meeting in his home with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

Now, in these verses, we are finally given a backstage pass to study the secret that lay behind all of Daniel's breakthroughs. We discover that Daniel's ministry for God in public, flowed out of his ministry to God in private.

Ironically, it is only when Darius makes praying to God illegal that Daniel opens up the windows on his prayer life. Quite literally. When he hears that the other two sarks have persuaded the king to make his secret strength illegal, Daniel rushes home and opens the windows of his prayer room with the result that everyone can see where his priorities lie.

In these two verses, we can see five aspects to Daniel's secret weapon of prayer.

First, Daniel makes prayer a lifestyle.

We are told that he responds to the king's rash decree by praying fervently "just as he had done before." Prayer is a habit that we acquire over time, like going to the gym or getting up when our alarm goes off in the morning.

Second, Daniel gives prayer a specific time.

We are told that "three times a day he got down on his knees". This appears to mean that, following the lead of King David in Psalm 55:17, the prophet cleared his diary for prayer first thing in the morning, then again at lunchtime, and then finally before he went to bed in the evening. One of the reasons why we often fail to do this ourselves is that we become busy. It is therefore pretty sobering to consider that Daniel carved out three appointments each day to meet with God in prayer, despite having the needs of forty satraps constantly banging on his door.

Calvin advised. To counteract our natural disposition not to pray, he advised people to schedule prayer times when they woke up, before lunch and at the end of the day.

Third, Daniel gives prayer a specific place.

We are told that "he went home to his upstairs room". This was possibly a special prayer chamber on his rooftop, but nobody needs a large house to do as Daniel models for us here.

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I sit in my study at home to pray. It doesn't matter where we choose to be our place of prayer, but simply that we choose somewhere!

Fourth, Daniel gives prayer a specific posture.

We are told literally that "he knelt down on his knees". What we do with our bodies while we pray matters far more than many of us realize. Daniel chose to kneel before the Lord, as before a king, so that his eyes would become fixed, not on himself, but on the sovereignty of God. Daniel's posture helped him to spend his time worshipping, instead of worrying.

Fifth, Daniel gives his prayers a specific focus.

We are told that he prayed in a room "where the windows opened towards Jerusalem." That's because he knew precisely what he was asking for from the Lord.

In chapter 9, we can read one of the prayers that Daniel prayed in his upper room. It is focused on the fact that God's Temple is a pile of rubble. It pleads with the Lord to revive the Jewish community in Babylon and to return them to the Promised Land to rebuild a dwelling place for the Lord.

A literal translation of the Aramaic text of verse 11 explains that this is what Daniel is doing here. His work colleagues find him on his knees, "making requests and asking for favour".

So don't miss the secret of Daniel's many spiritual breakthroughs in Babylon. All of his prophecies and all of his miracles were powered by his rooftop engine room of prayer. Even when praying to the Lord became illegal, Daniel persisted in his lifestyle of prayer. He kept the same times, the same place, the same posture and the same focus as before. He went into his prayer room three times a day, believing: It is God who put you here.

Jesus said when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Daniel spent many hours in private prayer – only opening his window when his faith was challenged. And we know how the story goes – the Lord protected and prospered Daniel even when he was thrown to the lion and thrown in the fiery furnace.

Prayer, the powerhouse of our lives. Want to see the world changed? – then pray.

Amen