

Dare in Prayer to be a Daniel

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Introduction

The renowned 19th century hymn writer, P. P. Bliss¹ (1838-1876) once wrote a song for his Sunday School class, entitled “Dare to be a Daniel,” the chorus of which reads: “Dare to be a Daniel, Dare to stand alone, Dare to have a purpose firm! Dare to make it known!” Daniel was known for his stand (as a teenager in Daniel 1 and as an octogenarian in chapter 6). What was the secret to his standing? It was his kneeling.

Daniel’s Praying

The book of Daniel records several instances of Daniel praying²:

1. *Daniel’s praying in chapter 2*

When some of the wise men of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, were unable to reveal his dream and its interpretation, Nebuchadnezzar decreed the death of all the Babylonian wise men (vs. 12-13), among whom were Daniel and his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. After being granted a temporary stay by Nebuchadnezzar (v. 16), Daniel led the foursome in prayer (vs. 17-18). God answered by revealing to them Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and its interpretation (v. 19a). Daniel once again prayed, thanking and praising God for the answer (vs. 19b-23). When he revealed the dream and its interpretation to Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel gave God the glory (vs. 28a, 29b, and 45b), causing Nebuchadnezzar to do the same (v. 47).

Prayer lessons to be learned:

- “Take it to the Lord in prayer.” Daniel did not just make it known to his companions (v. 17), but also to God. When in a predicament (but not just when in a predicament), pray (cf. Hezekiah’s prayer in 2 Kings 19:14f//Isaiah 37:14f).

¹Some of the hymns Bliss wrote include “Almost Persuaded”; “Hallelujah, What a Savior!”; “Let the Lower Lights be Burning”; “Wonderful Words of Life”; “Jesus Loves Even Me”; “Whosoever Will”; “Once for All”; and “Hold the Fort.” He wrote the tunes to “It is Well With My Soul” and “I Gave My Life for Thee.” He wrote the text of what came to be the hymn, “I Will Sing of My Redeemer,” which text was found in his belongings after he and his wife were tragically killed in a train crash in Ashtabula, Ohio on December 29, 1876.

²This study will consider three of them. A fourth could be added, that of chapter 10.

- Pray with partners (cf. the corporate praying of the early church in Acts³, such as in 1:12-14, 24, the end of 2:42, 4:24f, 6:6, 12:5 and 12, 13:3, and 14:23).
- Thank and praise God for answered prayer, giving Him all the glory. Don't just share prayer requests, but praises also (such as Hannah did in 1 Samuel 2:1f after her prayer in 1 Samuel 1:10f).

2. *Daniel's praying in chapter 6*

At this point in the book of Daniel, the Babylonians have been conquered by the Medo-Persians. Darius the Mede, the current king, is so impressed by Daniel's character that he is about to promote him to second in command in the kingdom (v. 3). Daniel's political rivals seek to prevent such a promotion by convincing Darius to make a decree that they are certain Daniel will disobey (cf. Acts 5:29)—no prayer to anyone but Darius for 30 days, with death for disobedience (vs. 4-9). At this point, Daniel once again (cf. chapter 1) shows his “spiritual moxie,” his seemingly crazy courage, by persisting in his practice of openly praying to God three times a day. In spite of the decree and the dilemma it created for him, Daniel was undeterred in his devotion to God:

When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously (Daniel 6:10)

As a result of Daniel's predictability in prayer (end of v. 10 and v. 11; cf. vs. 4 and 20), his opponents were able to press charges against him (vs. 12-15), leading to Daniel's descent into the den of lions (vs. 16-17) and the divine deliverance (vs. 20-23) and declaration by Darius (vs. 25-27) that resulted.

Prayer lessons to be learned:

- Once again, “take it to the Lord in prayer.”

³It is corporate, rather than personal, prayer that is highlighted in Acts. “The hallmark of Western civilization has been rugged individualism. Because of our philosophy of life, we are used to the personal pronouns I and my and me. We have not been taught to think in terms of we and ours and us. Consequently we ‘individualize’ many references to corporate experience in the New Testament, thus often emphasizing personal prayer, personal Bible study, personal evangelism, and personal Christian maturity and growth. The facts are that more is said in the Book of Acts and the Epistles about corporate prayer, corporate learning of biblical truth, corporate evangelism, and corporate Christian maturity and growth than about the personal aspects of these Christian disciplines” (Gene Getz). “...[W]hile the sincere importunate prayer of a single saint gains entrance into the throne of the Almighty, the entreaties of many believers bombarding the gates of Heaven often prove more effective in accomplishing God's purposes” (Gerald Priest).

- Find an appropriate place to pray, such as Daniel’s “upper chamber⁴” (cf. the “prayer closet” of Matthew 6:6, as well as Jesus retreating to a mountain to pray in Matthew 14:23 and into the wilderness to pray in Luke 5:16).
- Kneeling is an appropriate prayer posture (see also 1 Kings 8:54, Ezra 9:5, Luke 22:41, Acts 7:60, 9:40, 21:5, and Ephesians 3:14). Why? Other appropriate prayer postures include standing (1 Kings 8:22 and Mark 11:25), sitting (2 Samuel 7:18), and prostrate/falling on your face (Numbers 16:22 and Matthew 26:39).
- Pray regularly. As a Jew, Daniel prayed three times a day, at morning, noon, and night (see Psalm 55:17). Daniel was not “too busy to pray,” though if anyone was, he was.
- Pray with thanksgiving, even if circumstances do not seem conducive to it (cf. Philippians 4:6 and 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).
- Be predictable⁵, especially when it comes to prayer. Daniel’s opponents knew where Daniel would be, when, and what he would be doing.

3. *Daniel’s praying in chapter 9*

At approximately the same time as chapter 6, Daniel was reading from the book of Jeremiah, which revealed that the Babylonian captivity of Judah would last for 70 years, coming to a close with the demise of the Babylonian empire (v. 2; cf. Jeremiah 25:11-12 and 29:10-11).⁶ Daniel prayed for the realization of this revelation (vs. 3-19), in the way that Solomon (see 1 Kings 8:46-53//2 Chronicles 6:36-39) and Jeremiah (see Jeremiah 29:12-14) had suggested.⁷

His prayer was one of confession (vs. 3-15) and supplication (vs. 16-19). In it, he confessed the supremacy of Jehovah, both His greatness and goodness (v. 4, start of v. 7, v. 9a, middle of v. 14, start of v. 15, start of v. 16, and end of v. 18), and the sinfulness of the Jews (vs. 5-6, end of v. 7, end of v. 8, vs. 9b-11a, end of v.

⁴ “[Daniel] had chosen an apartment raised above the flat roof of his home as the place for his fellowship with God, a place more removed and less liable to disturbance than his usual living quarters” (D. Edmond Hiebert, *Working With God Through Intercessory Prayer*, p. 103).

⁵ It was once said of Dr. B. Myron Cedarholm, the founder of Maranatha Baptist Bible College in Watertown, Wisconsin, that he was the most predictable man one had ever met.

⁶ Daniel was among the first of three groups of Jews that were taken into captivity, being taken to Babylon in 605 B.C. It is now approximately 538 B.C., only a few years before the 70 years were up. Accordingly, the Babylonian empire had fallen to the Medo-Persians (end of Daniel chapter 5).

⁷ When Daniel prayed in chapter 6, his prayer may have been that of chapter 9, as seen by the fact that he prayed with his windows open towards Jerusalem (Daniel 6:10) and that praying toward Jerusalem is what Solomon had suggested (see 1 Kings 8:48//2 Chronicles 6:38).

11, v. 13b, end of v. 14, end of v. 15, and end of v. 16). God was right (start of v. 7, middle of v. 14, and start of v. 16), they were wrong (vs. 5-6, end of v. 7, end of v. 8, vs. 9b-11a, end of v. 11, v. 13b, end of v. 14, end of v. 15, and end of v. 16). God had revealed (vs. 5b-6 and end of v. 10). The Jews had rejected His revelation (vs. 5-6 and vs. 10-11a). God responded to their rejection with His wrath (middle of v. 16), as seen by the captivity, the consequence for their failure to keep the covenant (middle of v. 11, vs. 12-13a, v. 14a, and end of v. 16; cf. Leviticus 26:33). If the Jews would repent of their wrong, God would remit their sin and restore them to their land (Leviticus 26:40-45). Daniel's ultimate motivation for praying what he prayed was the glory of God (end of v. 17 and end of v. 19; cf. the start of v. 15, as well as Ezekiel 36:19-24).

God answered Daniel's prayer, as in 538 B.C. the Medo-Persian king, Cyrus would issue a decree, ending the captivity by permitting the Jews to return to the Promised Land (see 2 Chronicles 36:22-23//Ezra 1:1-4).

Prayer lessons to be learned:

- Pray according to God's revealed will. This is the key to answered prayer (John 15:7 and 1 John 5:14-15; cf. the praying of Jacob in Genesis 32:9-12, which was in accordance with what God had revealed to him in Genesis 28:14 and 31:3; the praying of David in 2 Samuel 7:18-29, which was in accordance with the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7:4-17; the praying of Solomon in 1 Kings 8:22-53, which was also in accordance with the Davidic covenant; and the praying of Elijah in James 5:17-18, which was in accordance with God's revealed will in 1 Kings 17:1, 18:1, and 42-45). This is what Daniel did, praying according to what God had revealed through Jeremiah. Though God had predicted the end of the exile and the return to the Promised Land, thus making it assured, it was not automatic. The means would be penitent prayer. Prayer is a means of getting God's will done on earth, as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10b and 26:39).⁸

⁸“... [P]rayer is not so much getting God to pay attention to our requests as it is getting our requests in line with His perfect and desirable will for us. It is learning to think God's thoughts after Him and to desire His desires. [C. H.] Dodd writes on this point, ‘Prayer rightly considered is not a device for employing the resources of omnipotence to fulfill our own desires, but a means by which our desires may be redirected according to the mind of God, and made into channels for the forces of his will’” (James Montgomery Boice). “One of the most important elements of intercession is to think through, in light of Scripture, what it is God wants us to ask for” (D.A. Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and His Prayers*, pp. 32-33). “... [E]ffectiveness in prayer will always be coupled with regular reading, memorizing of and meditating on Scripture. I see almost no potential to become a so-called prayer warrior where systematic Bible reading and study are absent. The Bible is the *only* divinely inspired guidebook to the will and thought of God. And learning to pray effectively boils down largely to learning to think like God and understanding his will. Read the Book” (W. Bingham Hunter, *The God Who Hears*, p. 104; emphasis his). “We must learn to use the Bible as the guide for our praying. Prayer nourished and guided by the Word of God will

- Prepare to pray. Daniel “turned [his] face to the Lord God” (v. 3), which John Walvoord (*Daniel: the Key to Prophetic Revelation*, p. 205) describes as “a formal beginning in which Daniel turns away from other things to concentrate on his prayer to the Lord.”
- Praise God in prayer, both for His greatness and goodness. Like Daniel, start your prayer with adoration (cf. Matthew 6:9).
- Make confession part of your praying (cf. Matthew 6:12, as well as the prayers of Ezra in Ezra 9 and of Nehemiah in Nehemiah 1).
- Make the glory of God your ultimate motive for praying (cf. David’s prayer in 2 Samuel 7:25-26; Elijah’s prayer in 1 Kings 18:37; and Hezekiah’s prayer in 2 Kings 19:19//Isaiah 37:20; as well as Christ’s words in John 14:13).⁹

Conclusion

Daniel was one whom God greatly loved (Daniel 9:23, 10:11, and 19). I think his prayer life had something to do with it.

be effective. George Mueller, a noted man of prayer, used this secret. For some years he had followed the custom of praying first and then reading the Bible, with no special connection between the two. Then he was led to turn the process completely around; after a word of invocation to have the Spirit’s teaching, he now spent hours pouring over the Word, filling himself with the living Word of God; after this, in the very mind of Christ which he had thus received, he poured out praise, prayer, and supplication in great fullness and assurance” (D. Edmond Hiebert, *Working with God Through Intercessory Prayer*, p. 108).

⁹“Has God become so central to all our thoughts and pursuits, and thus to our praying, that we cannot easily imagine asking for anything without consciously longing that the answer bring glory to God?” (D.A. Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and His Prayers*, p. 203).