

STRANGERS + EXILES: PRAYER AND WARFARE

June 11, 2017 | Pastor Randy Remington

We continue with our study in Daniel, who most experts believe is 80 to 90 years old at this point. We will be looking through the metaphoric lens of a pilgrim who is living as an exile in a constant state of tension. Our study today will take us into chapters 6, 9 and 10 as we focus on prayer and the warfare around us and so much more.

Many belief systems place man at the center; Daniel's faith has God at its center. When we think about it, this was really the issue in the garden, "you will be like God..."

Daniel understood when God raises or lifts you up, people will attempt to tear you down; you can anticipate this even amongst God's people. His faithfulness to pray is being used as a weapon against him. Even though a decree went out from the king, Daniel kept his routine on prayer:

"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." (Daniel 6:10)

So what allowed Daniel to live so successfully in this constant tension? Here are a couple of important observations:

- **When you've knelt before God, you can stand before man.** For 80 years this was Daniel's pattern or lifestyle. God had been faithful to him; he woke up every morning aware that there was something far bigger than himself. Daniel figured out very early that his life needed to be connected and stay connected to God.
- **Desperation drives discipline** Daniel understood that he needed supernatural wisdom, strength and guidance. He was desperate, he knew he couldn't change the culture around him. No one told him he needed to pray; he had to. It is out of this desperation that he became disciplined.

Many today tend to ask "what do I have to do", wondering what the minimum is. Daniel lived in the maximum, asking what is the maximum I can do?

- **Daniel was willing to be thrown in the lion's den before he stopped praying.** When it came down to it, Daniel would not stop walking with God, praying, etc. He would be thrown into the lion's den before he would stop.

PRAYING FOR A DESOLATE CHURCH

1. SCRIPTURE

- Daniel reads the Words of God and responds in prayer.

"In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom— in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. (Daniel 9:1-3)

Daniel is reading Jeremiah 29 and sees that the exile will last for 70 years. He responds to the Word of God. Daniel discerns a "gap" between what God has spoken and what was going on around him...so he prayed God's word, therefore God's will.

"Effective prayer begins when you perceive a gap between where something is and where God wants it to be"

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:11-13)

- Prayers that start in heaven are heard in heaven.

2. CONFESSION

- Israel was trapped in guilt and shame

I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed:

“Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land.

“Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame—the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. We and our kings, our princes and our ancestors are covered with shame, Lord, because we have sinned against you. The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; we have not obeyed the Lord our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. (Daniel 9:4-11a)

- Israel was captive to godless forces

“Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you. You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing on us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem. Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come on us, yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. The Lord did not hesitate to bring the disaster on us, for the Lord our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him.” (Daniel 9:11b-14)

- Israel was irrelevant, a byword among the nations

“Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. Our sins and the iniquities of our ancestors have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us.” (Daniel 9:16)

“Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.” (Daniel 9:17-19)

3. PERSISTENCE

- Daniel was willing to persist in prayer until God answered.

Pastor Randy told an account of a couple in our local church family. The male half had left and was gone for some time. Many around the wife began to advise her to divorce him although she was persistent. She said; “what if I stopped praying one day short of my miracle”.

“Then he continued, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.” (Daniel 10:12-13)

- Daniel persisted in the face of spiritual opposition

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:12)

Daniel wouldn't quit, even in the midst of spiritual opposition. It is wise to know where the battle really is; it's not with things and not even with people but with;

“...the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In this sermon lesson we asked ourselves; “what allowed Daniel to live so successfully in this constant tension”? Please discuss the first point, “When you’ve knelt before God, you can stand before man”.
2. The second and third discussion points regarding how Daniel was so successful as an exile, (on page 2 of your notes) are; “Desperation drives discipline”. And “Daniel was willing to be thrown into the lion’s den before he stopped praying”.
3. Daniel was dedicated in praying for his people in exile. We would say today; “Praying for a Desolate Church”. Daniel reads the Words of God and responds in prayer. Pastor Randy explained that Daniel saw a “Gap” between what God had said and what was going on around him. What do we mean by this gap and how should it direct our prayer life?
4. On page 3 of your notes, we see an important part of prayer for the exiles and the church... “confession”. Take another look at Daniel 9:4-11a and discuss your observations about Daniels prayer in relation to confession.
5. In addition to God’s word and confession, we see the role that “persistence” plays in prayer. So lastly look again on page 5 and discuss what part persistence plays, as well as spiritual opposition.