

## THE BENEFITS OF PRAYER

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It has been rightly stated that prayer is the most overlooked blessing that God offers to His children. Despite the Scripture's frequent reminders, some will go for days without praying. The reasons for this failure to petition God could be many. However, the greatest reason could be that many do not fully understand the benefits that come from a persistent prayer life.

The Bible is very clear to show us the benefits of prayer. In fact, it could be no plainer told than by the words of James, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"(James 5:16). Very simply put; prayer works. That should be benefit enough to use it.

God was also gracious enough to explain this principle in human example. Through men such as Abraham, Joseph, Paul and Christ, God helps us to understand the validity and usefulness of prayer. These points are not any clearer seen than in the life of Daniel. In fact, the benefits of prayer may be seen in his life more than any other.

You will recall the background to Daniel's story. He was a young man somewhere between the ages of 16 and 20 when the Babylonians invaded his homeland and took him captive. In this foreign land Daniel was made a eunuch and tempted with the food of the kingdom. In all of this Daniel remained faithful to his God. Daniel was called to tell and interpret the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. Through these events God was magnified and Daniel was blessed.

Daniel's time in captivity saw a shift in world power. While still in service to the Babylonians, the Medo-Persian empire was being built. Eventually, Babylon would fall and another king from this new empire would rule the land. However, because of his loyalty Daniel would be promoted to a position of authority under this king as well. One of the main reasons for Daniel's blessings was his faithfulness to God in prayer. Chapter six of Daniel's book tells the story of these events. Within the context of this account, many benefits of prayer are seen.

Because Daniel was a man of prayer, he had a life of lavish blessings (6:1-3); there was in him a lack

of fault (6:4); he was a light of influence (6:10-11); God gave him a lasting deliverance (6:21-22).

### LAVISH BLESSINGS

As any good leader will do, Darius decided to delegate authority and responsibility to those who were deserving of the opportunity. Among all the men in that kingdom, Daniel was the one most responsible and the most well liked. Keep in mind, Daniel was a prisoner. Not only was he a prisoner, but he was a prisoner of another king. Darius's army was not even the one that removed Daniel from his original homeland. Yet, the king saw something in Daniel that was different from the rest: "Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm" (Dan. 6:3).

The above mentioned verse is not the first time in the life of Daniel that he was put in a place of power and authority. Nebuchadnezzar had seen the same thing in Daniel that Darius saw. The same, of course, holds true for the kings of Babylon that followed Nebuchadnezzar. What was so different about this man Daniel? The answer is that God was with him. God was with him in the early decisions he made about the food of the kingdom. God was with him when we told and interpreted the dream of chapter two. God was with him when he told Nebuchadnezzar that his kingdom would be taken because he refused to give God the credit. God was with him because Daniel was a man of prayer.

Remember, however, Daniel's life was not problem free. Nor was his life pain free. After all, he was a captive in a strange land. But prayer help Daniel make the most of his situation. From that viewpoint, Daniel lived a life of lavish blessings because he prayed to God fervently and earnestly.

### LACK OF FAULT

Motivated by envy, "the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom" (Dan. 6:4). They were jealous of the position that this Jewish captive had received. Maybe

they felt that they were better suited for the office. Maybe they simply wanted someone nationally related to the empire to serve. Whatever their reason, they did not want Daniel in the place he was. So, they set out to find a way to discredit him in the eyes of the king. Apparently Daniel had enough influence with the king that they could not simply accuse him and persuade the king. Daniel's character was so strong that mere accusations would not sway the king.

However, remainder of verse four says, "but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." Does this not sound a lot like the situation with our Lord and the Pharisees? They sought on a number of occasions to discredit Him, but were unsuccessful. Even when Christ stood before a cowardly, crowd-pleasing judge (Pilate), He was declared to be innocent of all charges (John 19:4).

Certainly there is a link between Daniel lack of fault and his prayer life. A man that prays is a man who will do all he can to avoid temptation and sin (Matt. 6:13). A man that prays is a man who will use prayer to make right anything that may be amiss in his life (I John 1:7-9). A man that prays is a man who will concentrate on spiritual things so that his line of communication to God will not be cut off (Isa. 59:1-2). Daniel was upright and godly before all as a result of his active prayer life with God.

## LIGHT OF INFLUENCE

As Daniel's story continues, we find that his enemies devised a plan. They encouraged that the king pass a decree that basically told Daniel that he could not pray: "All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions" (Dan. 6:7).

When Daniel learns of the decree, he continues his practice of prayer just the way he always had. "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (Dan. 6:10). It is safe to assume that Daniel knew he was being watched. Or if he did not know he was being watched, he certainly understood the risk of being seen when he opened "his chamber toward Jerusalem."

It is safe to say that Daniel wanted to be an influence of good in a kingdom of heathens. He realized that his duty to God extended beyond the law of the land. Remember, he had lived in three different kingdoms and had remained true to God in each one.

Daniel's light was seen. It was seen by his adversaries, but it was seen. Let us not think that if the only response we get to our faithfulness is negative that we have not done our job. Remember that the light of Christ expels the darkness and that those in the darkness do not like the light. Daniel's light was also seen by the king: "Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him" (Dan. 6:14). Did you notice that the king was upset when he realized who this new law had condemned? Daniel's light of influence was so bright that the king was displeased with himself at the decree he had made.

So, because the law of the Medes and Persians could not be changed, Daniel was carried to a den of lions and cast in (6:16). However, it was at this time that he received the greatest benefit of his prayers.

## LASTING DELIVERANCE

We should all know the end of this familiar story. God sent the angel to shut the lions mouth and to protect his prayerful follower. When the king returned he rejoiced to see Daniel alive. He then called for Daniel's accusers and had them cast into the pit. The Bible records: "the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den" (Dan. 6:24).

Dear friend, there is coming a day in which the prayerful of all ages will find that lasting deliverance. Sin will forever be removed from our presence and our accuser, Satan himself, will be cast into the pit that is reserved for him. "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mat. 25:41). What a wonderful day of deliverance that will be!

Does 1 Thessalonians 5:17 describe your life? Do you pray daily, persistently, fervently, openly, faithfully and boldly? If you do, God will lavishly bless you in both this life and the next; there will be few faults found in your character; you will be a light of influence in a dark world; you will be granted a lasting deliverance. Truly prayer is beneficial!