

DANIEL ... who refused to close his windows
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(DANIEL 6: 10)

The Babylonian presidents and princes were leaving the royal palace; they were jubilant. Their leader held a document which would mean the realization of all their dreams. The upstart Daniel would soon be in his place! They were convinced of three things: (i) The king would not break his word. He had signed the decree which could mean the death of Daniel. (ii) Daniel would never betray his faith. Not even the threat of martyrdom would change his daily routine of worship. (iii) Their plan was flawless. The Hebrew would soon be thrown to the lions; their path to preeminence would no longer be blocked by a foreigner. Poor Daniel!

How Great His Wisdom

"Now when Daniel knew that the decree was signed, he went into his house . . . and prayed." He refused to panic. It would appear from earlier chapters that this home had often been a place of refuge. Daniel had turned his home into a sanctuary. When problems harassed his soul, when danger threatened, Daniel invariably "went into his house" (see 2:17). This man could have protested to the king, or he might have tried to gain sympathy from his friends in the kingdom. The wise Hebrew never did anything until he had first drawn near to God.

How Great His Courage

"He went into his house, and his windows being open . . . he prayed." Did he pause to look at the open windows? Did a sinister voice whisper, "Daniel, don't be a fool. Trouble will come soon enough without your looking for it. Close the windows, or your enemies might see you in prayer." Did he smile and recognize that even a closed window could testify? Had he succumbed to that temptation, he would have (i) ruined his testimony, (ii) troubled his mind, (iii) disappointed his God, and (iv) hindered his prayer. No, the window should stay open. It would be better to die in the sunshine than live in the shadows.

How Great His Faith

". . . his windows being open . . . toward Jerusalem." Possibly Daniel had other windows in his house, for he had attained to a degree of eminence within the Babylonian court. His windows were not open merely to permit the entry of fresh air! Beyond the distant horizons lay the city of his fathers, the city of his God. Faith burned as a light within his soul. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was his God; the old city was his real home, and some day his faith would be vindicated. The nation would go back to Jerusalem.

How Great His Humility

". . . he went into his house . . . and knelt upon his knees." Daniel never knelt before any other. This man often entered into the presence of the king; this counselor often held audience with the greatest of earth's dignitaries; but he knelt only when he came before God. Greatness was born on his knees! He succeeded in reaching the stars when he prostrated himself before the Almighty. Other men, filled with pride, would have boasted of their magnificence; but Daniel constantly stayed at the feet of his God. His strength lay in his consecration.

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How Great His Persistence

". . . he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed. . . ." Daniel was a giant in prayer. He was never content to place a matter before God and then to sit back waiting for an answer. He besieged the throne of heaven, and persisted in his efforts until something happened. This was not a passing phase in his life; it was the habit of a life-time, and undoubtedly accounted for his mighty triumphs. Daniel 10: 1-13 reveals that on one occasion he prayed for three weeks; and probably had the answer been further delayed, he would have prayed for three months. He believed in both God and his cause. He could see no reason why God should not intervene, and therefore he continued praying until God did something. This is true prayer.

How Great His Gratitude

". . . he prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." It is worthy of note that he did not only pray: he gave thanks. It is easy to give thanks when God has already done something. It is not quite as simple to do that before the miracle has taken place. The threat of death lay over Daniel's head. Undoubtedly he hoped that God would intervene on his behalf; but since the ways of God are sometimes unpredictable, there remained the possibility that Daniel would still be thrown to the lions. Yet he continued to give thanks. Had he the assurance that God would deliver him? ". . . he prayed and gave thanks" . . . for what? Did he praise God for (i) past mercies, (ii) present peace of mind, (iii) future deliverance? Perhaps all three were expressed in his symphony of praise. Daniel was God's man, and even the lions recognized the fact when they reclined at his feet. They felt singularly honored that he had come to visit their home.

Hudson Taylor, whose Prayer changed the Weather

New Guinea is one of the most rugged countries in the world. High mountain ranges, intense tropical storms, and in places heavy seas crashing on sunken reefs, are sufficient to bring fear to the hearts of all travellers. Hudson Taylor, the famous missionary, had cause to know this, when on his way to China in 1853. Usually a breeze would spring up after sunset, and continue through the night until dawn. It was customary to make the maximum use of this, for during the calm daylight hours there was danger of drifting on to the reefs. Hudson Taylor described what took place.

"We were in dangerous proximity to the north of New Guinea. Saturday night had brought us to a point some thirty miles off the land, and during the Sunday morning service, which was held on deck, I could not fail to see that the captain looked troubled and frequently went over to the side of the ship. When the service was ended I learned from him the cause. A four-knot current was carrying us toward some sunken reefs, and we were already so near that it seemed improbable that we could get through the afternoon in safety. After dinner, the longboat was put out and all hands endeavored, without success, to turn the ship's head from the shore. After standing together on the deck for some time in silence, the captain said to me, 'Well, we have done everything that can be done. We can only await the result.' A thought occurred to me, and I replied, 'No, there is one thing we have not done yet.' 'What is that?' he queried. 'Four of us on board are Christians. Let us each retire to his own cabin, and in agreed prayer ask the Lord to give

DANIEL ... who refused to close his windows us immediately a breeze. He can as easily send it now as at sunset.' The captain complied with this proposal . . . I had a good but brief season in prayer, and then felt so satisfied that our request was granted that I could not continue asking, and very soon went up again on deck. The first officer, a godless man, was in charge. I went over and asked him to let down the corners of the mainsail. . . . 'What would be the good of that?' he asked roughly. I told him we had been asking a Wind from God, and that it was coming immediately; and we were so near the reef by this time that there was not a minute to lose. With an oath and a look of contempt, he said he would rather see a wind than hear of it. But while he was speaking I watched his eye, following it up to the royal; and there, sure enough, the corner of the topmost sail was beginning to tremble in the breeze. 'Don't you see the wind is coming? Look at the royal,' I exclaimed. 'No, it's only a cat's paw (a mere puff of wind). 'Cat's paw or not,' I cried, I please let down the mainsail and give us the benefit.' This he was not slow to do. In another minute the heavy tread of the men on deck brought up the captain from his cabin to see what was the matter. The breeze had indeed come. In a few minutes we were ploughing our way at six or seven knots an hour through the water ... and though the wind was sometimes unsteady, we did not altogether lose it until after passing the Pelew Islands. . . . Thus God encouraged me ere landing on China's shores to bring every variety of need to Him in prayer, and to expect that He would honor the name of the Lord Jesus and give the help each emergency required."

The Pilot's Face

Robert Louis Stevenson once told of a fearful storm at sea when a vessel seemed in imminent danger of sinking. As the waves repeatedly broke over the decks, the passengers were very frightened; but one of them, disobeying orders, went on deck, to see the pilot lashed to the wheel. Calmly the man was getting on with his task, and suddenly seeing the terror-stricken passenger, the pilot gave him a reassuring smile. Instantly a change came over the fearful traveller, and when he rejoined the others below deck, he said, "I have seen the face of the pilot, and he smiled. All is well." Surely that pilot would have appreciated Daniel's faith. Throughout the city of Babylon, storms were threatening to bring disaster to the people of God. Daniel was in great danger, yet he smiled. He had seen the face of God; he knew all would be well.

I once looked through the window of my church to see a small boy, Brinley Howells, banging on the front door knocker of his home. What I saw fascinated me, for the lad was using one hand to continue knocking while his other hand held up the flap of the letter-box. He knew his mother would respond to his call, and was actually looking through the opening to see her coming. In some senses that, even now, seems to be my most vivid illustration of believing prayer. It is insufficient merely to ask God to come; we should be looking for His appearance even while we ask.

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