

Prayer that Reaches Heaven (2)

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天に届く祈り(2)

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ゴットホルド・ベック

Daniel

9:1 “In the first year of the reign of Darius son of Ahasuerus, a descendant of the Medes, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans,—
9:2 in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, noted in the Scripture the total years that were assigned by the message from the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem: 70 years.

9:3 “So I turned my attention to the Lord God, seeking him in prayer and supplication, accompanied with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

9:4 I prayed to the Lord my God, confessing and saying: ‘Lord! Great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant and gracious love for those who love him and obey his commandments,

9:5 we’ve sinned, we’ve practiced evil, we’ve acted wickedly, and we’ve rebelled, turning away from your commands and from your regulations.

9:6 Furthermore, we haven’t listened to your servants, the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, to our officials, to our ancestors, and to all of the people of the land.

9:7 ‘To you, Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us, open humiliation—even to this day, to the men of Judah, the residents of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, both those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the lands to which you drove them because of their unfaithful acts that they committed against you.

9:8 ‘Open humiliation belongs to us, Lord, to our kings, our officials, and our ancestors, because we’ve sinned against you.

9:9 But to the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we’ve rebelled against him

9:20 “While I was still speaking in prayer, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and placing my request in the presence of the Lord my God on behalf of the holy mountain of God—

9:21 while I was still speaking, Gabriel the man of God whom I had seen in the previous vision, appeared to me about the time of the evening offering.

9:22 He gave instructions, and this is what he spoke to me: ‘Daniel, I’ve now come to give you insight and understanding.

9:23 Because you’re highly regarded, the answer was issued when you began your prayer, and I’ve come to tell you. Pay attention to my message

and you’ll understand the vision.

10:9 As I listened to the sound of his words, I fell down on my face unconscious, with my face to the ground.”

10:10 “All of a sudden, a hand touched me and lifted me upon my hands and knees.

10:11 He told me, ‘Daniel, man highly regarded, understand the message that I’m about to relate to you. Stand up, because I’ve been sent to you.’ When he spoke this statement to me, I stood there trembling.

10:12 “‘Don’t be afraid, Daniel,’ he told me, ‘because from the first day that you committed yourself to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard. I’ve come in answer to your prayers.

10:18 “Then this person who looked like a man touched me again and strengthened me

10:19 and said, ‘Don’t be afraid, man highly regarded. Be at peace, and be strong.’ “As soon as he spoke to me, I gained strength and replied, ‘Sir, please speak, now that you’ve strengthened me.’

[International Standard Version]

I would like to continue the discussion of the “importance of the prayer that reaches heaven”. What is without question the most important mission given to believers? It is of course to support the work of the Lord. According to the Book of Daniel, he truly devoted himself to work with the Lord. He was used extensively by the Lord, and blessed by the Lord. This phrase appears three times in the verses we just read: “A man highly regarded by God.”

Daniel

9:23 Because you’re highly regarded, the answer was issued when you began your prayer, and I’ve come to tell you. Pay attention to my message and you’ll understand the vision.

10:11 He told me, ‘Daniel, man highly regarded.’ When he spoke this statement to me, I stood there trembling.

10:19 and said, ‘Don’t be afraid, man highly regarded. Be at peace, and be strong.’ “As soon as he spoke to me, I gained strength and replied, ‘Sir, please speak, now that you’ve strengthened me.’

“My Lord, please speak,” It is unimaginably important to maintain this attitude. While all men certainly have ears, what matters is whether we are willing to hear or not.

Samuel also prayed this way in even older days. I am not quite sure of his age at the time. He might have been as young as 12 or 13 years old. Possibly,

he may have been a little older than that. But regardless, the Bible says “speak, Lord, because your servant is listening,” and when he took this attitude, not only those who stayed with him, but all the people of Israel received a great blessing.

When the Lord speaks, he speaks nothing but the truth, and that comes out of his heart. When the Lord called Daniel a “man highly regarded,” he really meant it, and there must have been a reason he did.

Needless to say, there were so many believers of the Lord in the time Daniel lived, but among them, he was the only person who was spoken of this way. “You are highly regarded.” This was the judgment of heaven toward Daniel.

What a blessing will it be if we are ever called this way! It is clearly stated in the Bible that Daniel was highly regarded by the Lord. However, we can see from the Bible that we too are actually highly regarded by the Lord. It is hard to believe, and in fact you may not be able to believe it. You may feel that you have no reason at all to be highly regarded. But, your own personal belief actually does not matter because you only need to believe in the Bible to know that it is true. The most well-known verse in the Bible must be John, 3:16:

John
3:16 For this is how God loved the world,....

That is to say, he loved me and he loved you.

3:16he gave his unique Son so that everyone who believes in him might not be lost but have eternal life.”

Romans
5:8 But God demonstrates his love for us by the fact that the Messiah died for us while we were still sinners.

1 John
4:9 This is how God’s love was revealed among us: God sent his unique Son into the world so that we might live through him.
4:10 This is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

As I just mentioned, Daniel was the one who worked with the Lord, especially on his prayers, and for this reason he was called, “the man highly regarded by the Lord.” What kind of prayer is a prayer that reaches heaven? I explained in the last meeting that it is a prayer that is based on the words of the Lord.

Daniel
9:2 in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, noted in the Scripture the total years that were assigned

by the message from the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem: 70 years.

We can see from this verse that Daniel read in the Bible about the prophet Jeremiah of those days. The words of the Lord occupied much of Daniel’s mind. He read the words of the Lord with his prayers keeping his mind focused where it should be. He learned the Bible earnestly, not just to build knowledge on the Scripture, but in order to understand the intentions of the Lord precisely and put them into practice.

After all, he had ears to hear. When Daniel prayed, his prayers reached heaven, and this was because Daniel understood the Lord’s will precisely. This was not only true in the era of the Old Testament, but we can see such examples in the era of the New Testament as well. Paul traveled all over the world to spread the gospel, and he tried to reach the believers at every corner of the world, and serve the people.

However, the Lord suddenly let Paul be sent to prison, and this was what the Lord intended. Why did the Lord not stop it from happening? He allowed it to happen because he intended to let Paul know what the Lord wanted from the people of those days. Paul wrote a lot of letters from that prison because he was suddenly given plenty of time to do what he needed to do.

He knew what he was supposed to write. The Epistles to Ephesians, Colossians and Philippians were all written from jail. The Lord revealed through Paul that believers were members of Christ’s body; they are heavenly people who have Jesus as their head.

Many people do not understand that the flock of believers is all heavenly, spiritual, and universal. The church that the Lord is aiming at is not an organization built by man. It should be one organic body that has Jesus as its head. The church that pleases the Lord is a congregation of those who are connected with Jesus. Paul mentioned this at the end of Ephesians.

Ephesians
6:18 Pray in the Spirit at all times with every kind of prayer and request. Likewise, be alert with your most diligent efforts and pray for all the saints.

This verse tells us to continue to pray, to pray in the Spirit at all times, and to pray for all the saints. As I earlier mentioned, a prayer that reaches heaven is a prayer that is based on the Bible.

Secondly, a prayer that reaches heaven is a prayer prayed by someone whose life itself is a living

testimony. Daniel's prayer was heard. Why was it? It was because Daniel avoided all things that were against the Lord's will in all aspects of his life.

Daniel stayed far away from everything that pleased himself. If we pray only for what we wish, and do not care about the purpose of the Lord, our prayers will never reach heaven. Purposes of our own simply constitute an obstacle to true prayers.

Daniel threw away all things that may have possibly pleased him. That was the reason the Lord called Daniel, "A man highly regarded." Paul worried so much about many brothers and sisters in Philippi and wrote in his epistle:

Philippians

2:21 For all the others look after their own interests, not after those of Jesus the Messiah.

They did not intend to be so, but this was their reality. Paul, contrarily could say:

Philippians

1:21 For to me, to go on living is the Messiah, and to die is gain.

It is true to say that Daniel was thoroughly separated from the worldly way of living. He refused to compromise with gentiles because their purpose and practice totally conflicted with the Lord. Many of the believers today conform to this world, don't they? In addition to Daniel, the Bible also describes how his friends reacted when they shared his fate.

Daniel

3:16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered King Nebuchadnezzar, "It's not necessary for us to respond in this matter.

3:17 Your majesty, if it be his will, our God whom we serve can deliver us from the blazing fire furnace, and he will deliver us from you.

3:18 But if not, rest assured, your majesty, that we won't serve your gods, and we won't worship the golden statue that you have set up."

Many believers pursue the respect of people and want to be praised by others instead of seeking the prize from above that will never wither away. How can we testify if we pursue worldly pleasure and follow the worldly way of life? Another important characteristic of Daniel was that he never feared men. He was not even afraid of the King, who had absolute authority in those days.

Daniel

1:8 Daniel determined within himself not to become defiled by the king's menu of rich foods or by the king's wine, so he requested permission from the chief officer not to defile himself.

He was not forced to do so, but he actually made a personal choice to do what he believed was right.

Daniel

6:10 When Daniel learned that the written document had been signed, he went to an upstairs room in his house that had windows opened facing Jerusalem. Three times a day he would kneel down, pray, and give thanks to his God, just as he had previously done.

6:11 The conspirators then went as a group and found Daniel praying and seeking help before his God.

6:16 At this point, the king ordered Daniel brought in and thrown into the lions' pit. The king spoke to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve constantly, will deliver you himself."

6:23 The king was ecstatic, so he gave orders for Daniel to be released from the pit. Daniel was taken up from the pit, and no injury was found to have been inflicted on him, because he had believed in his God.

Those who rely on the Lord will experience the miracle. When we do, even the devil cannot touch us. If we fear and obey men, we would never be able to pray a strong prayer like Daniel did.

Yet another characteristic of Daniel was that he was not affected by any human relationship in this world. For Daniel, and his friends, it was such a courageous decision to make to refuse to become involved in any worldly affairs.

This decision threw Daniel into the lions' den and threw his friends into the blazing fire furnace. However, they were protected by the Lord. Their prayers were heard. Before it happened, there were two different ways before them.

One was a way to compromise with this world, and choose to live comfortably. And the other, was the way that led them to the lions and the blazing fire furnace. They chose the way of the Lord. They refused to compromise: instead they devoted themselves to the Lord and did not care about their own lives. The Lord heard their prayers and revealed his glory. When Daniel stayed away from all things that were against the Lord, his mind was set to one clear goal:

Daniel

10:12 'Don't be afraid, Daniel,' he told me, 'because from the first day that you committed yourself to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard. I've come in answer to your prayers.

Daniel was very sincere and his mind was totally

focused on the accomplishment of the Lord's purpose. Are our hearts dedicated for the assembly, which is the pure virgin engaged to Jesus? Is the joy of our hearts expressed in our prayers? Paul understood the Lord's will and prayed. The prayer he offered can be found in the Second Epistle to Corinthians, 11:2:

2 Corinthians

11:2 I am jealous of you with God's own jealousy, because I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to the Messiah.

The Lord blesses, not a mind floating around purposelessly, but the mind that is set to do his will. When each one of us believers gathers with clear conscious awareness that this is the church of the living God headed by the Lord Jesus and we become single-minded in our prayers, then the window of heaven will open and our prayers will be heard abundantly. Paul wrote to the brothers and sisters in Corinth:

1 Corinthians

9:24 You know that in a race all the runners run but only one wins the prize, don't you? You must run in such a way that you may be victorious.
9:25 Everyone who enters an athletic contest practices self-control in everything. They do it to win a wreath that withers away, but we run to win a prize that never fades.

Philippians

3:14 I keep pursuing the goal to win the prize of God's heavenly call in the Messiah Jesus.

Hebrews

12:1 Therefore, having so vast a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, and throwing off everything that hinders us and especially the sin that so easily entangles us, let us keep running with endurance the race set before us.

Daniel was a great servant of the Lord. As I just mentioned, first of all, it was because he determinedly rejected all things that were against the Lord. Secondly, his mind was totally focused on the pursuit of one clear purpose. Furthermore, it was because he had patience.

Daniel

10:12 'Don't be afraid, Daniel,' he told me, 'because from the first day that you committed yourself to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard. I've come in answer to your prayers.'
10:13 However, the prince of the kingdom of Persia opposed me for 21 days.

Daniel prayed sincerely before the Lord for 21 days.

He never stopped praying for three weeks. Praying for 21 days for a single matter is not something just anyone can do. Consider ourselves: have we ever offered a prayer as sincere as this?

We often come to the Lord with some specific problem in mind and pray about it for a moment, then just move on. Such prayers will never be answered. Daniel stayed in front of the Lord patiently and continued to pray for one purpose. It takes such patient prayer to have an amazing experience like Daniel had.

We can see from the Bible that Abraham had the same experience.

Genesis

18:22 Abraham remained standing in the presence of the Lord.

Genesis

19:29 And so it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham and brought Lot out from the midst of the destruction when he overthrew the cities where Lot had lived.

Another reason that Daniel was chosen as a servant was because of his self-control. According to the Book of Daniel, 10:12, Daniel committed himself to be humble before his God. What is described in this verse is the battle in which Daniel has overcome his own self.

Daniel refused to give in to his own thoughts, his own intentions, and his own emotions, but instead conquered them. We can also see from the Book of Daniel, chapter 10, verse 13, how Daniel suppressed himself. He did not care about his own benefit at all and instead devoted everything to the Lord. We will be truly blessed when the Holy Spirit dominates us and gives us one desire; it is a passionate sense of mission to accomplish the purpose of the Lord.

1 Corinthians

9:25 Everyone who enters an athletic contest practices self-control in everything. They do it to win a wreath that withers away, but we run to win a prize that never fades.

There was yet another reason that Daniel was chosen to serve the Lord. It was the conviction he had. This expression is used in 10:12 of the Book of Daniel, "because your words were heard." Daniel did not hope his prayer to be heard one day, but he was convinced that his words were already heard.

Not only did Daniel know the intention of the Lord, but he believed and anticipated that the Lord would help him achieve what he prayed for. For our prayers to be heard by the Lord, it is necessary that we understand his will, then we must anticipate and be

convinced of the acceptance of the prayers. If we do not understand the Lord's will, we won't know what and how to pray at all.

If we listen to the words of the Lord, and understand his will, it will absolutely be our strength. Our most important mission is to work with the Lord. Have we understood what the Lord intends for us to accomplish just like Daniel knew?

When we do, we will again sense the power of evil spirits attempting to attack us from nearby, just as Daniel was attacked by the devil. Those who know the Lord's will are certain to be exposed to attack by the devil. Paul experienced the same thing, that is to say, the devil concentrated his attack on Paul.

Colossians

4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer. Be alert and thankful when you pray.

4:3 At the same time also pray for us—that God would open before us a door for the word so that we may tell the secret about the Messiah, for which I have been imprisoned.

Let us look at what Paul wrote in this letter. I will finish this sermon with one more verse.

1 Thessalonians

2:18 That is why we wanted to come to you.

Certainly I, Paul, wanted to come time and again, but Satan blocked our way.

If the Lord opens the eyes of our hearts and gives us the sincere desire to sacrifice everything in order to work with him, as he did to Daniel and Paul, it will be a wonderful blessing for us. We will be truly grateful if, one day, we are called by the Lord, "the man highly regarded."

End