

Do. my - 202-15-78

"THE COST OF PRAYER"

Introduction:

Daniel 6:1-10

Have you ever asked yourself the question - is there such a thing as a price to pray? Does it pay - or does it cost?

Perhaps a question like this could be answered in the story of Daniel.

We have read stories about timid individuals who go off to college, service men, or others. How they hide Bibles under their pillow. Or men in politics or business. They do not want to show that they are Christians.

Daniel had enemies in the strange land. He did not look for them - but they found him because of his great success in public and the way he lived. He was not in Babylon by choice, he was there as a captive. He was brought there against his will as a slave. You would think that a young fellow like this would have given up on praying. And he thought perhaps when I go back to Jerusalem, and I get to be an old man, I can take up prayer again.

If you stand for anything in life - you will have some enemies. And so you chose - or you ought to chose your friends with care. Your enemies you'll not be able to choose - but they are there. And they will come to you sometimes with recommendations, as your friend in life - but they will turn out to be your enemies. Daniel had the kind of friends that would always be known as prayer meeting

friends. And that is the kind to have. I like people who attend (prayer meeting) and those who like prayer. Really, I think they are some of God's choice people.

It is quite a tragedy that even (church leaders) today spend so little time in prayer. They will justify themselves for by-passing a prayer meeting, for something that is lesser.

Daniel's enemies plotted against his life. As all enemies will do. They used deception - they tried to trap him.

And of course the enemies of Daniel recognized that his prayer was a habit, and his way of life. Hence, they had no trouble at this point. His faith would stand up even in captivity. His faith was grounded.

The story of Daniel is one of the most (fascinating stories) in the Bible. It has so many possibilities for Godliness and for unGodliness.

6:3 In V. 3 - We find the key to his wonderful loyalty. It says, an (excellent spirit) was in him. That means, that this spirit was dominated with high values. Fine, noble, admired. Excellent means something that excels. Or goes beyond. The word carries exactly that meaning.

A spirit that excelled was in him. It projected him - not flesh but spirit, was the chief thing. And this is evident from the very beginning in the story of Daniel. It was not the king's wine or food that was the principle thing about Daniel. But here was a man who began life in the spiritual. There are several things that reveal that his life excels. He had a great purpose. He was a man of prayer and he was a man of power. I'll say a few things about these as we go along.

Daniel could have been like the young people today. Professor George Wald, wrote a speech - ("Generation Without A Future"). In it he pointed out that many young people today fear they will not grow up. They are so wrapped up in the bomb and in war, and in the film of "Woodstock" - The Rock Festival, that attracted 500,000 in 1969, the entire crowd stood to sing the chorus. ("We're All Gonna Die"). They sang that chorus over and over.

Some call this the "now generation" - now is all they have to live in. And they feel there is (no future).

Daniel lived just after the (midnight) sound on his society. For his country - for his family. War had taken away everything. His nation had been over-run by enemy troops. His beautiful home had been reduced to rubble. His relatives and friends lay dead. The Babylonians had crushed Judah. The capitol of Jerusalem, had been destroyed.

Something worse had taken place. Many of the (young people) of Judah

had been (deported.) Daniel had been marked by the cruel conquerors. And he represented the flower of the nation - but now he was like an animal. He had been captured. He was 600 miles away - across the Arabian Desert. Hundreds perished, during the march and the ordeal, and they had to cross that desert. They were torn from their families and they were absorbed by the population.

1:5
6
(Nebuchadrezzar) came up with a scheme. We'll try an experiment. And his experiment was to take a few of the (Hebrew boys) - selecting the brightest ones from the best families of Jerusalem. And he was going to give them instruction. He was going to have a three year cram course in the culture of his nation - literature, language, art, customs, and diet.

This sounds very much like the Colonial Days in which the (British Empire) took the promising young men of the Colonies and sent them to Cambridge or Oxford - and then send them back to the jungles or India or wherever. And they were products and victims of the system. And they were to be the British ruling class. With accent, cane, and derby hat. Now Daniel and three other companions were selected in this process. They were to be educated. Dressed. Taught. Eat and drink. And behave like the Babylonians. One thing happened to them that no one would like. Their names were changed. Daniel became (Beltshazzar.) The other three friends were assigned names - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

1:7
Your name is a badge. And when a person has a name taken away -

he feels that he has been stripped of his identity. Deprived of a portion of his life.

In 1970, a man who was born in Scotland, by the name of George Wrzyszc of Polish parents, enlisted in the Army. He was unhappy when he became known in the eyes of the British Army as Pvt. XYZ - because nobody could pronounce his name. Maybe they have changed my name said George proudly - but I haven't changed it. I like the name Wrzyszc. Now Daniel and his companions were subject to this experience. Deprived of their Hebrew names.

Daniel's name continued - and he insisted to still be Daniel. In the Hebrew the meaning was God is my judge. This was a heritage and he refused to surrender this.

1:5 → The first open clash in the program came over food. The king was introducing and left an order with his staff, that they should be fed the rich food of the court. Knowing that young people loved to eat and had a great appetite. He figured that the royal kitchen would be able to do the job. One of the quickest ways to win these four young men, would be through their stomach.

Now these men had been used to a diet of kosher laws. And their mouth watered for the tasty looking meats and dishes that were set before them.

man restaurant - lonely - water - "Meat loaf of a kind word"
water brought Meat loaf - "What is my 'Good word'?" - Naikin bend down whispered "Don't eat the Meat loaf"

Undoubtedly considered, that they had to eat something, but why

1:5 not draw the line and why draw the line over such a minor thing as food.

Why risk upsetting the king. Why it would be silly and trifling. As to say about what we want to eat.

1:12 Now Daniel held on to his name, and remember God is my judge. He took his clue from his name, and he persuaded his three other friends, let us not eat this food - instead they asked the king's staff, let us eat vegetables and drink plain water, for 10 days. And insisting that they would look healthier than the others.

1:15 Daniel 1:15 -- Then all the youth who ate the king's rich food, the Hebrews looked healthier.

Now the servants were reluctant to go along with Daniel's test. And after 10 days, they were surprised. They found out that these young men were more robust, than anyone else.

Remember this was a three-year program that called for these to not only dress and speak the language.

1:20 Chapter 1 - V. 20. Every matter of wisdom and understanding - these young men were superior. The king could not understand this.

Of course the secret lay in their faith. He thought that he saw four boys who had been cleverly brain-washed, at being Babylonians. He never suspected that they knew that they belonged to God.

1:21

Chapter 1 - Verse 21 - Daniel's faithfulness was not a flash in the pan. It was steady. It was day in and day out devotion to God. The Scripture says, and Daniel continued. The culture tried to grind down Daniel to it's own shape. But Daniel continued to be Daniel - not Belteshazzar.

2:1

Like God's men in every age, Daniel was able to interpret the signs of the time. For example, while he was still quite a young man the king was troubled and frightened by dreams which he could never recall nor recount. He called in his troupes of wisemen, advisors, the occult, demanding an interpretation. Now the emperor's staff could not even guess what the dream might have been. He was angry and he threatened them with death - but they would not tell him. Daniel and his three friends prayed, and the Bible accounts says 2:19 - then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision in the night. Then Daniel blessed God.

2:19

2:27

The point is, he did not work up some mumbo-jumbo with the Lord for a special news flash. Rather, no wise men, enchanters, or others can show the king the mystery. Which the king has asked. But there is a God in Heaven who reveals mysteries. 2:27.

God the creator, sustainer, and redeemer of all men - Daniel boldly

proclaimed all that God discloses. His ultimate purpose in the universe. He judges all men and he insists that all men are accountable unto him.

I think Daniel's announcement still stands - it is a good warning. When we read an estimated over 20 million in the U. S. astrology, who take it seriously. And we get off on witchcraft, books, and black magic. And mind expanding drugs - why Babylon 2500 years ago in which Daniel lived, is very much like today.

2:38
The next thing that took place was this - Daniel did not perform stunts. He did not claim any unique personal wisdom. Daniel's God gave Daniel insight. Into the things that disturbed the thinking of the king. And he described the king's nightmare as a great statue or image. A golden head, a silver chest, bronze hips and thighs, iron legs, and clay feet. Towering over all. Suddenly, struck by the clay feet with stone, the huge image crashed into speck-sized fragments. And was carried away by the wind. While the stone grew to such size that it filled the earth.

Now Daniel informed the king that this horrible dream meant that his world empire was going to collapse. And he succeeded by three world empires before the final coming of God's kingdom.

4:27

Chapter 4:27 - Daniel deals with another of the king's dreams. He dreamed about a tree which had been chopped down by a being from

Heaven. Leaving only a stump. Being a man of faith and insight

4:32
33 Daniel told the king that he was going to be insane and would crawl around on the ground like an animal. But he plead with him, break off your sins by practicing righteousness. And your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed - that there may be perhaps a lengthening of your tranquility.

4:30 What did the king do? he ignored the council.

He was proud, he boasted. Like Edith Sitwell, shortly before her death - she said, I know I ought not to dread death. But I am so conceited that I simply cannot imagine how the world can get along without me. Now the king had proudly remarked - is not this great battle which I have built by my mighty power, for the glory of it my majesty. 4:30.

Now Daniel took note of what the king had said in his speech. I, me, and mine. He had a habit of speaking that way. And Daniel saw him as one puffed up. And he knew that the king used such words as power, glory, and majesty, to describe himself. Instead of God the supreme one. And he was mocking God.

One year after he told him the dream about this tree, Nebuchadrezzar went mad. Exactly as Daniel had predicted. And he went out in the field like an ox - eating grass. Developing claw-like finger nails. And was covered with a huge mat of unkept hair.

5:1 Now let us note one more thing that is very interesting in the story of Daniel. King Belshazzar succeeded Nebuchadrezzar and proved to be an unstable dictator.

5:7 The banquet is the thing that is interesting here. One evening he was having a banquet - he ordered gold and silver. And trays that he had captured from the Jerusalem temple. In mock ritual, he was going to have a party. And he was going to praise the Gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. But to the horror of this king - suddenly he noticed the strange lettering on the wall. He stopped the feast, he called for his magic men - his astrologers. Chapter 5:7. Whosoever reads this writing and shows me the interpretation, shall be clothed with purple, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and be the third ruler in the Kingdom.

Helplessly the king stood by. He was in panic. But he had presence of mind to call Daniel. Because he had heard about him.

5:20-22 Daniel brushed aside all of the offer that the king had presented him, about making him a powerful ruler. Dan. 5:20. His heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly - he was deposed from the kingly throne, and his glory taken from it. Chapter 5:22 - Daniel continued to describe the days of Nebuchadrezzar. When he ate grass like an ox. And then he turned to this new king and said - you, his son, Belshazzar have not humbled your heart though you knew all of this. But you have lifted up yourself against the Lord.

5:22-27

He told him that these were signs from God. As reported, these letters that he has numbered, that he has weighed, he has divided. The Perusians, they are doomed.

God has weighed you in the balance and found you wanting.

Dan. 5:25-28.

That same night (Darius) came in and succeeded in taking over the kingdom. Daniel did not pretend to have any kind of particular powers. His ability was 5:21 - the most high God rules the kingdom of men. Anytime that any man refuses to live obediently before God, he is going to have trouble. 4:27 - God's rule is to practice righteousness and show mercy.

We Christians today are the Daniels - we should be able to discern the signs of the times, better than anyone else. We do so not by spooky tramps - but Christians are not any smarter than anyone else. Rather we are able to look at human events, like Daniel - we know that everything that is and shall be, in under the final review of God.

Signs of the times, Daniel started practicing righteousness and showing mercy. You look around today, who are the oppressed today. Are they receiving mercy?

Now the church today is continuing in the role of Daniel. To interpret the times.

Daniel, the Hebrew captive boy, was appointed the top man under Darius and he reached this position of power, and Daniel had his enemies.

And these enemies saw him as a farmer. And of course in politics and in factions and schemes, they wanted to push him out of No. 1 position.

Now the enemies came to the king who was a push-over. And they said, we want you to forbid anyone from taking part in worship for 30 days, to honor the king. He willingly agreed, to this suggestion. The document was signed and Daniel's enemies waited to pounce upon him.

Notice the penalty - it meant death. The act of worship apart from the glory of the king, and now Daniel could have played it safe. He could have simply said - I will not pray for a month. It would have been simple for him, and all that Daniel would have had to do, was just play it easy.

There was no need to be extremeist - he says, the law is a law.

Why risk, why you can pray some other day. Besides, how can I be sure about God. He could have debated.

Napoleon once said, when I am in France - I am a Christian.
When I am in Egypt I am a Mohamman. Now this kind of committment is what the world wants of disciples. It gets this kind of committment - and research shows that most people, including church people, will look to the social role and follow at the moment. They are like catepillars that play a game through life. And if the head

catepillar runs around and around in a circle, the entire procession dies of starvation. Most people prefer to show conformity instead of commitment. It is more comfortable that way with them.

An old German story Taylor, 1800, Had Number of strange guests at his Table. Said to one Neft to him to say grace, that one requested his friend, the friend requested the Neft to him. So it passed around till come back to German. He said "Well, we can do with out this time."

But the non-conformist refuses to sell their faith. He even continues to pray. He opens his window and faces his boy-hood home in Jerusalem. Knowing that he could be seen. He refuses to compromise. Now Daniel had the assurance that he would survive the lion's pit. No assurance really. Come life or death however, he would not conform.

At this point, I want to say, very simply - there are two important things here about Daniel. He had a purpose. And of course, he was a man of prayer. And these things are very very important. Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat. And what this means is that everything, he directed himself to the supreme center of his life of commitment.

All young people need this. Daniel found this in his name. And when his back was up against the wall - I will not touch the king's wine. And he said, the flesh will not over-power me. My purpose is not to defile myself.

I want to urge you the importance of having a purpose - and not only that, declaring it. Taking a definite position. Will you be loyal to Christ. I meet a lot of people who say - I tried but I failed.

I want to be a Christian but this or the other thing stands in my way. Now I think you are not to do these things in order to be come a Christian. You are to become a Christian in order to be able to do these things. You are to find your center in order to correct these other things. The first thing is that the man has a purpose in his heart. And that purpose to crown Jesus Christ. I will begin there - and then if the King's meat and the king's wine interfere with my loyalty, I am to refuse.

Now Daniel was a man of prayer - he paid the price is what we are talking about - the cost of prayer here. Nothing stands out more clearly than this. He had a habit of three times a day - toward old Jerusalem, leaning hard on God in prayer. He realizes his limitations and he was also convicted of the sufficiency of God.

Quite often in the days of youth, a person feels so self-sufficient. His eyes are bright and quick, oh that God may reveal to us at once. But this is not so. Sooner or later, the Godless life is always a failure and a wreck. "When I would do good - evil is present with me." That is a story that we need to learn. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Some of you have come to Chesapeake - some of you with great advantages, some with good parents, some with good home training - and some may have even been born here in this city. But you know the vices and the sins of this city. And sooner or later, unless you learn the secret of the dependence upon God, you'll be wrecked and ruined. I am going to tell you that evil is too strong for you.

I may be speaking to someone who has fallen. If I should take

you back to that point of your fall, and say - had you been trusting and depending on God, and recognizing his power, and talking to him in prayer three times a day and leaning upon him - you would have won where you failed. Young people say, I have failed and I could not help it. Well, that is partly true - but it is mostly untrue. But to be loyal to Christ, you cannot help but succeed. Evil cannot master you. If you are attached to the resources of God.

When Jesus swept away the temple in Jerusalem - he said the whole earth was going to be his temple. And you can pray and form a habit of praying.

→ In the book of Hebrews - "we may find grace to help us in a time of need." Now, as we translate that - it reads, "find grace to help us in the nick of time," right there when the peril is hottest. That I may need grace. The strongest man in Chesapeake is not the man who can say to Jesus, in the morning - I will not forsake thee today and then go out and fight his own battles alone. He is the strong man who says to his master in the morning, Lord, you lead me today lest I fall. And then prays in the city, the office, the shop or factory. Or wherever he is, and whether he is in loneliness. Everywhere that the grace of God that awaits, and pray for God to come and give him his presence.

Daniel must have been about 85-90 years of age. And he occupied the second place in the kingdom. And he was in the role of prime-minister. He had been a slave.

It is very strange that God uses situations like this to bless.

How many hymns Fannie Crosby would have written if she had not been blind, and dependent upon God.

How much would the apostle Paul done if he had not had to deal with the thorn in the flesh. The lions are always waiting for the Christians. But here is a test that really challenges a true believer. There is more peace in the lion's den than there is in the palace.

6:20 The question is this - the King asked Daniel the next morning, in Chapter 6:20 - oh Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually been able to deliver you from the lions.

The question is still being asked - does it pay to pray! - or is the cost greater than I need to put out. And we answer with the song writer he is able. If we do God's will and leave things in his hands, then we know that he will close the mouths of the angry and hungry lions.

Remember this, there were no temples of prayer, no houses of prayer, in that pagan land. Daniel made himself a place of prayer by opening his window, facing Jerusalem. In the Middle-East where it is hot the year round, and no doubt, he was in an upstairs window, where he could have privacy and a refuge from the heat, and he used this place to pray. And the window looked out towards his old home.

We have a daily devotional book called "Open Windows". And it

is amazing how a little open window had such significance in God's Word. Take the five sparrows, or the two mites, or the rooster crowing. He uses ordinary things to change the lives of people.

The enemies were watching Daniel and that open window. Do you think he wondered whether he should close it. He probably did. You can be sure that the God of Daniel remembered that he prayed three times a day. If he closed it - would God have answered his prayer. God has no trouble hearing through a closed window. But I think Daniel would have had difficulty praying with a closed window.

Daniel knelt humbly before God on his knees.

You remember in the Alps, the guide said - I want you now to get down on your knees. Sometimes we can make greater progress on our knees with the difficult winds, and the snow, and the ice.

That window was a witness to the faith of a man of God. And it was a testimony to a life of prayer. We can mark that forever. It symbolizes that God watches over his people.

6:10
In C. 6:10 - here is a real secret. The principle of prayer. And it says this - as he did aforetime. What this means is - the decree had been signed. Daniel was to die. If he paid homage to anyone else but the king. His enemies watched - nevertheless, he went on as was his habit. It teaches us how to pray in a time of

calm as well as crisis.

Would God not listen to one who had been praying three times a day before crisis.

Here is a principle - that God left open a window of Heaven.

When the Titanic vessel sailing under the British flag was sinking - the captain sent for his officers. The last thing he said to them on the bridge was -- men be men, be British. There were a few principles that he felt worth dying for. And Daniel would say, be men and women of courage, be prayerful.

How does the story end?

9:22 Daniel 9:22 - He came and said, he to me, oh Daniel, I have now come out to give you wisdom and understanding at the beginning of your supplications, a word went forth, and I have come to tell it to you - that you are greatly beloved. God greatly loves a man that opens the doors and windows of his heart to Heaven.

And in this society in which we live, which has the signs of sickness, and so many conform to the current culture. And being pushed on into the pit of despair, disgrace, fear, defeat, and death. There are a few Christians that still struggle in the pit.

The Christian, however, already knows that God has gone down

into the pit and the burial of Jesus Christ - God sacrificed everything for us. He knows that we are in the midst of roaring beasts - and at the resurrection, God's final answer will be, God was victorious.

9:20

King Darius spent a sleepless night wondering what was going to happen to the lion pit. He hurried to that cave, and says, has your God been able to deliver you. V. 20. Knowing that usually the victims did not expect to give an answer, Daniel replied that God indeed had been able to deliver him from the Den.

The secret of Daniel's power lay outside the Den.

Our God is able. He is able to deliver Daniel from the Den of lions. He is able to raise Jesus from the pit of death. He is able to deliver you. No matter where you are. Listen, there are no money back guarantees that will insure that every hour will be smooth. But God has promised to deliver every person who will pay the cost and the price as Daniel paid.

Victor Hugo *about to* tells of man on ship, sinking.

People Hopless -

Dr. on ship said on your knees -

Repentance is a ship that men sink -

you have lost your compass. you are wrong -
you still have prayer

No man is hopeless if he will pray!