

## Your Prayers Are Heard

Daniel 10:1-12

This friend of mine has a line that he says all the time. Frank liked to say, “*The world is crazy, man; the world is crazy!!!*” Frank loved to say those words. He used this line for any reason and for no reason. Many times he said, “*The world is crazy*”, I could understand why he was saying those words. He said it when he was happy, sad, angry or frustrated. Being honest, many times I thought to myself, “I think the one going crazy is you, Frank.”

“*The world is crazy man...*” I am pretty sure that at some point in our lives we have used the same words to describe our reality. When we see nonsense, conflict, violent acts, injustice, unnecessary pain, ignorance and mediocrity leading the way, we may be tempted to say, “*The world is crazy, man...*”.

Daniel was living in a world with a lot of craziness going on. The prophet lived during times of political instability, exile, hardships and tribulations. After going through a lot in his life, Daniel received a word from God, and this vision troubled him greatly.

We know from today’s reading that such a revelation weighed down Daniel’s spirit because of all the conflict he saw. For three weeks, the prophet of God did not eat. No wine entered his mouth. Daniel did not shower at all (not even a Cuban shower [spraying cologne/perfume on you]). I would say the prophet was in a state of shock and even depression.

I want you to see the way Daniel responded initially to the vision he was given. As emotional beings, there are moments when we cannot help but feel hopeless, helpless, wounded, or discouraged. Not only Daniel, but other great leaders in the Bible (e.g. Elijah) had similar experiences. They were emotionally and spiritually affected by their own difficult realities.

We are not exceptions. We, like Daniel, can feel the same way when we look around and see our world going nuts. If we add to the craziness of this world our own difficulties, for sure that can make an impact on our emotions and spirits. But, what should we do when we feel overwhelmed by the worries and adversities of life? Let me tell you what Daniel did.

After 3 weeks of giving into despair, Daniel went out to the bank of the great river Tigris. One of my first reactions when reading the passage was, “Thank goodness he is going to the river to bathe.” But no, I was greatly disappointed when I read that he was only “*standing on the bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris)*” (v.4). What was Daniel doing at the riverside if he was not planning on bathing?

Daniel went to the river to lay down the burden that was weighing down his spirit. Daniel went down to the river to pray. I guess he didn’t eat, drink, and probably didn’t bathe, but one thing he did: Daniel prayed.

Church, I know we all have had times of despair. We know that Daniel was facing one of those times. At this specific moment of his life, instead of permanently dwelling in his anguish and desolation, Daniel decided to go down and pray by the riverside.

**How often do we pray?** My invitation to all of us this morning is to make a daily appointment, “Down by the Riverside,” and bring all our cares and concerns to our good friend, mighty Savior

and Lord, Jesus Christ. Do not dwell in despair for the rest of your life, but pray. Do not wait to feel like praying, because there will be more times you won't want to pray than the times you want to. This is not because there is something wrong with you or me; it is just because "*the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*" (Matthew 26:41).

Don't wait to have the strength or the desire to pray. Make daily walks to the river, enter your prayer closet as often as possible (even if you have to push yourself), and lay down your burdens before the Lord of all.

Daniel didn't wait to feel better in order to pray; rather, it was **in prayer that Daniel was made stronger**. It was in prayer that **Daniel was comforted and reassured**. It was in prayer that Daniel was given a "further vision for those days" (v. 14).

I want to point out that we don't know what kind of prayer Daniel made because it is not explicitly stated in the text. However, if you keep reading chapter 10 through 12, you will conclude that Daniel was praying for those things he had seen in an earlier vision and were of great concern to him.

As Daniel was standing on the bank of the river Tigris praying, he had another vision. One of the things I like about chapters 10, 11, and 12 is that Daniel did not talk much. Daniel was caught up in a vision, and instead of talking, he listened.

There is a time for everything. There is a time for you to cast (through words) all your anxieties on the One who cares, and there is also a time to closely listen to the words of the One who cares. Prayer gives us time for both: to talk and to listen to God. So, when you come in prayer before God, make sure that you listen more than, or at least as much as, you speak. Because **it is by listening to the voice of God that our spirits are rekindled and replenished**.

In the vision, Daniel was reassured, and the assurance came with the following expression, "*your words are being heard*" (v.12). This is very important, because sometimes we pray, and it feels like our prayers bounce off the ceiling. I feel that way when I pray for peace, and then innocent people die because of acts of violence.

I am sure you feel the same way when you pray, and nothing seems to change. Let me tell you something. As Daniel was told, God is telling us all today, "*your words are being heard*" (v.12). Don't ever think that you are alone or that you are wasting your time: Your prayers are being heard! Don't give up! Make daily walks to the riverside! Your prayers are heard!

Daniel was not only reassured. He was also made stronger. As Daniel was standing on the river bank, "*One in human form touched [him] and strengthened [him]*" (v.18). Many times God answers our prayers not by changing the situation we are facing, but by strengthening us so that we can become agents of transformation in the midst of those situations.

*"We never know how God will answer our prayers, but we can expect that He will get us involved in His plan for the answer."* **Corrie ten Boom**

So, the angel touched and strengthened Daniel. *He said, "Do not fear, greatly beloved, you are safe. Be strong and courageous!"* (v.19). In the midst of conflict and brokenness, you and I are safe. God holds us in his hands and will never let us go. We are safe because as the psalmist

wrote, “*though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult*” (Psalm 46:2-3), God is our refuge and strength.

So, Daniel was having a rough time spiritually and emotionally. The prophet decided to pray despite the way he was feeling and in prayer he was reassured and made stronger.

But there is something else I want to share with you. It was in prayer that Daniel was given a broader vision for those days. Here are the words the angels spoke to Daniel, “*I have come to help you understand what is to happen to your people at the end of days. For **there is a further vision for those days***” (v.14).

What we see and experience today will not remain forever. *There is a further vision.* It is when we are in communion with God that we can get a glimpse of our true story in God. Prayer is one of the spiritual practices that helps us get a peek over God’s shoulders, and see the world as God wants it and is recreating it to be. It is when we see things through the eyes of God that we remain hopeful in the midst of brokenness, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer.

Daniel only had a small portion of the story. Most of the times we also see partially. I want to tell you that what we see is a very incomplete description of a reality that is much greater in God’s plan. *There is a further vision.* Because there is a further vision I can tell you that life does not end in:

- unemployment nor under-employment
- isolation nor desolation
- tears nor pain
- darkness nor death

Let me tell you how life will unfold. This is coming straight from the encounter Daniel had with God in the vision.

*“There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered... those who sleep in the dust of the earth[a] shall awake... Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. **Daniel 12:1-3 NRSV***

Brothers and sisters in Christ, indeed we live in a world full of conflict and brokenness, but don’t give into despair. Rather, go to the river and pray. Pray, knowing that your words are being heard. Pray and lay down your burdens. Let God make you stronger, comfort you, and give you a further and clearer vision of his plans for you and the whole created order. Amen.