



PRAYER DEVOTIONS



Summer 2009

RBCPC

Morning Prayer

Heavenly Father, Holy God,
Tender, merciful, gracious Lord,
As I awake from peaceful rest
Your Name is on my lips.

In the quiet of the morning I pray
And thank You, God, for this good day
Father, align my heart with yours
To glorify You in all I do.

In humble gratitude I bow,
To think you call me and know me by name.
May all that I do and all I say
Reflect your love this day.

I lift up those placed on my heart,
And release them to your strong, sure hands,
Surrendered to your loving care,
And trusting in your will divine.

Forgive me for that which I have done
Not of Your will but mine alone,
And for the things I've left undone
Or in fear have turned away from.

Thank you for your blessings poured out
And thank you for challenges, too –
In each of them, let me afresh
See glimpses and be glimpses of You.

Thank you for your Holy Spirit
That guides me and quickens my heart -
May I listen and hear your voice only
And follow your righteous paths.

May Thy will unfold both within myself
And to all those you place on my way,
And may all that I do impart
Your love everywhere and always.

This day, let me not end the prayer,
But stay in connection with You.
I offer to You my heart, my hands
To shed Your love wherever You've planned.

In Jesus' Name I pray.... --Rachel Gleed



Reflections on the Power of Prayer

Prayer is a mighty force. Through prayer, we connect to God – to His power and His glory. There is no force greater than God’s power. There is no outcome more perfect than His will, reflecting His glory.

Daniel 2:17-19 records the power of prayer at work. Daniel, an Israelite in captivity in Babylon, learned that King Nebuchadnezzar had ordered that all wise men of Babylon were to be executed because none of the king’s astrologers, enchanters or magicians had been able to interpret a troubling dream. Daniel did not panic – he turned to prayer, and urged his friends to join him in pleading to God for mercy regarding the mystery of the king’s dream so that they might not be executed. God answered: “During the night, the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision.” In verses 20-23, Daniel acknowledges God’s power and glory as his prayer turned to praise and thanksgiving:

“Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever;

wisdom and power are his.

²¹ He changes times and seasons;

he sets up kings and deposes them.

He gives wisdom to the wise

and knowledge to the discerning.

²² He reveals deep and hidden things;

he knows what lies in darkness,

and light dwells with him.

²³ I thank and praise you, O God of my fathers:

You have given me wisdom and power,

you have made known to me what we asked of you,

you have made known to us the dream of the king.”

God was further glorified when Daniel went to King Nebuchadnezzar, humbly identified and interpreted the dream, and the king in turn praised and glorified God saying, “Surely your God is the god of gods and the Lord of kings and revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery.” Daniel was placed in a high position in the royal court, in charge of all the wise men of Babylon. At Daniel’s request, his three Israelite friends were appointed as administrators over the province of Babylon.

No matter what the circumstances, connecting to God through prayer unleashes His power to bring about outcomes to His glory. Halleluiah and Amen!

--Rachel Gleed



Giving God the Credit

One year after Daniel interprets King Nebuchadnezzar's dream for the first time, the king has forgotten Daniel's warning:

As he looked out across the city, he said, he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"
Daniel 4:30

Within the hour, Nebuchadnezzar was driven from human society.

How quickly we humans take all the credit for our successes. When was the last time you gave God the credit for the beautiful flowers *you* planted in *your* garden? The college degree *you* earned? The tennis match *you* just won? *Your* intelligent and successful children? The last 5 pounds *you* lost? The lucrative business deal *you* negotiated and won? The friend *you* invited to join your small group?

Jesus, I pray that I will remember that it is not by my own resources that bring me success. Help me to always know that you are the one who gives me the power to work and succeed.

Additional reference: Deuteronomy 8:17-18

--Rochelle Castillo

Zechariah 4:6 *“It is not by force nor by strength, but by my spirit, says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.”*

We live in a culture where everything earned is received by effort- grades in school, victory in competition, success in work, weight loss, raising children into mature adulthood- even our spiritual life. We are told that we can be happier if only we would pray more, attend more, serve more, and give more. The subtlety is that it’s so true! “You reap what you sow”. Thomas Jefferson said, “I’m a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it.” But is it the full story? In what parts of your life are you at a loss? Where have you reached your limit of knowledge, wisdom, patience, persistence, or courage? Who is God to you when you run out of your own resources? Is he the one who tells you to grow up and work harder and smarter? No! *“It’s not by your force nor by your strength”*. It’s not by your wisdom or your wit. It’s utterly beyond you. If you were more honest, you would admit that a lot in your life qualifies for that space-beyond what you’re capable of. Of course you’re free to keep trying harder and harder. Good luck! Or, you can lean into God and admit that you need help: at work, in school, with your body, being a parent, in your marriage, and in becoming the best version of yourself. What if you had personal access to the financial acuity of Warren Buffett, the parenting wisdom of Bill Cosby, the business savvy of Bill Gates, the spiritual knowledge of your pastor, and the relationship skills of Dr. Phil? Would you use them? The spirit of God stands by your side, whispering this promise to you: ‘it’s not by your force nor by your strength, but through me.’

--Scott Schimmel

Mercy

Daniel pleads with King Nebuchadnezzar:

“Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue.” Daniel 4:27

Daniel gives Nebuchadnezzar a simple solution to his sinful ways: be merciful to the poor. How hard could that have been with all the king’s wealth? He could have fed and clothed many from his wealthy coffers, without even changing his own high quality of life. But his heart was hard, and he lost his opportunity.

Jesus, I pray that my heart will not be hard to the poor. Open my eyes to see their needs, open my hands to help them, and open my heart to love them. Please show me how I can be merciful to: [list those, by name, you know in need of spiritual and physical help].

New Testament Reflection: Matthew 25:35

--Rochelle Castillo





Daniel 6:10 “ ... when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God.”

Daniel and his three friends were only teenagers when they were taken to King Nebuchadnezzar’s palace, while the rest of the Hebrew nation was taken into captivity in Babylon. The year was 603 BCE. Even at that young age, Daniel was not only obedient to God, he was aware of God’s ability, and desire, to help.

The verse above was written 62 years, and three kings later. Still Daniel is faithful to his practice of prayer. God always is first in Daniel’s life. No matter what the threat is, Daniel’s life remains usable by God. Like Paul in Hebrews 13:6 he shows us that we too might be bold to claim: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

Daniel’s example of faithfulness to God and lack of fear in his present circumstances, give us an example we can apply in our own lives. To be useful, to God and to others, we need never be driven by our own steam. Daniel was usable by God because he was aware of Who God is... the God of the Universe, the True God, a God nearby.

Dear Lord,

May I remember that you are the God of the Universe. Whatever I may encounter today, I will be able to face because You are with me. Help me to let the truth of Your place in my life be a quiet testimony that others may come to know You.

Through Christ our Lord, I pray,

Amen.

--Cary Boyll

Isaiah 38:1-6 *“About that time king Hezekiah became deathly ill... 'This is what the Lord says: Set your affairs in order, for you are going to die' ...When Hezekiah heard this, he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord...Then this message came to Isaiah from the Lord: 'this is what the Lord, the God of your ancestor David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will rescue you and this city from the king of Assyria.'”*

Does God know your true desire? Have you told him what you want and what you hope for? Or do you assume he already knows? Even as well as we know our kids- their personalities, hobbies, interests- there are parts of them that are unseen to us. The latest toy, the model of car, a career path- we don't know it all. Our kids have learned through childhood that if they want something then they should ask their parents. How else will their parents know what they want if they don't ask? As good parents, we don't always give them what they want. Most of their wishes are just that- fleeting wishes and desires brought about by a recent commercial or latest fad. But every now and then a child is persistent and focused about something and keeps asking and asking, maybe even bartering or persuading his parents to buy it for him. In his persistence we relent, not because we are weakened but because we love our kids and want to give them good gifts. How much more is God like that? What if he's not as inflexible as you think? If you truly care about something, truly long for significance, for a career change, for a new friendship, success at work, character trait- tell him about it. Then tell him again. Be persistent, and focused. Take a risk and ask for it. He might say no- maybe it's not the best for you. Or maybe, in his benevolence and interest in you he will give you what you hope for. Hezekiah is devastated by the news of his death, and calls upon God to change his mind. God does, and gives him not only an extended stay on earth but also victory in battle and success as a king. Open up your heart to him; have a conversation with him.

--Scott Schimmel

Daniel 10:12-13 *“Then he said, ‘Don’t be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day you began to pray for understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your request has been heard in heaven. I have come in answer to your prayer. But for twenty-one days the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia blocked my way.’”*

Do you ever wonder if God answers your prayers- if he’s actually ‘up there’, listening to you and caring about your life? Nothing can plague a growing vibrancy in the life of prayer than the small seed of doubt that you are in actuality trivial to God. For many, praying to God is risky. In a small way, we are surrendering control and responsibility of something near and dear to us in our lives to someone we are told exists yet remains by and large invisible to us. How silly, we might think, that the God of the universe would care enough about *me* to listen to my problems and trials. Well, read again the word from Daniel: “Fear not”. God promises that he listens to your prayers and pays careful attention to each of them. He can do that- not just because he is all-powerful and ever-present, but also because he likes you and cares about what you care about. If you feel like God is not hearing your prayers, perhaps consider being more persistent in bringing your requests before him. There might be something blocking his blessing, and requires your patience and trust. Do you really need his help? Are you really at a loss? If so, continue to bring it to him. *“Blessed are those who wait for his help”* (Isaiah 30:18).

--Scott Schimmel



Rancho Bernardo Community Presbyterian Church

www.rbcpc.org