People of Prayer

God exalted

God is exalted through the faithfulness of His servants in a time of testing. King Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed in Daniel 4:2-3, "I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. How great are His signs! And how mighty are his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation." Even the heathen can praise God. God is so high compared to all else. (When was the last time that we praised God for His greatness?)

Notice Nebuchadnezzar's words "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation." God's kingdom is forever, whereas men's kingdoms rise and fall. Nebuchadnezzar was recognizing how great our God is!

Perhaps the fiery test we are going through today will allow the heathen watching to see the greatness of our God!

People of Prayer

Removing proud leaders

Nebuchadnezzar soon forgot God and His power. In Daniel 4:30 we read, "The king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" God warned Nebuchadnezzar that his kingdom was departed from him. We see Nebuchadnezzar brought down. He began to eat grass like an ox. His hairs became like eagles' feathers, and his nails became like birds' claws. Then he remembered God.

...mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth forever.... Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase" (Daniel 4:34, 37).

Seeing God's power to remove proud leaders should encourage our hearts. God still reigns! He is in control! We should also heed this warning. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6).

People of Prayer

Servants

We find another king in Daniel chapter five. When King Belshazzar needed counsel, Daniel was brought in once again. The king sought to buy Daniel's help through gifts.

And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom" (Daniel 5:16).

Daniel was promised clothing, gold and position.

What was Daniel's answer? "Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation" (Daniel 5:17).

Praying saints are not covetous of clothing, money or position. Prayer cannot be bought. Saints are to be servants. Service is our duty.

People of Prayer

Enemies

As the Lord Jesus had enemies, so will His servants.

Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him" (Daniel 6:4).

Daniel was faithful. Even those carefully scrutinizing his life were unable to find anything--no faults, no gripes and no errors--about which to complain! When our lives are scrutinized, how do they measure up to God's Word?

People of Prayer

Prayer and God's Law

"Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God" (Daniel 6:5). Enemies of praying men also oppose God's law. Daniel's enemies opposed God's law and felt that they could work against Daniel based on that law.

Our obedience to God is sometimes the basis of accusations. When we are accused, we must stop and consider the basis of the accusation. Is it that I am obeying God's law? Is it that I have broken God's law? If the accusation is based on obedience to God's law, we have nothing for which to apologize and no reason to change course.

God's law includes praying. These men recognized that Daniel prayed in obedience to God's commands. Failure to pray is breaking the law of God. Failure to pray is sin.

People of Prayer

Consistency

Prayer should be consistent.

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime (Daniel 6:10).

Daniel continued to pray in the very same manner and at the same time. Daniel prayed and gave thanks! God can be thanked even in dangerous times. In the worst of times, we can thank God for His plentiful blessings. Daniel's manner, time, frequency and thankfulness in prayer were just the same before and during the trial. Daniel recognized that God's law is greater than man's law!

What does it take to keep us from getting on our knees?

People of Prayer

Consistency

"Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God" (Daniel 6:5). Daniel's consistency was noted by his enemies. They were very well aware of his prayer life and faithful service to God. They were pretty sure that the king's new law and the threat of the lion's den would not keep Daniel from praying! "Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God" (Daniel 6:11).

Is my prayer life consistent enough that others take note? This of course does not mean that I should be like the Pharisees that made a big show of their praying. Matthew 23:14 condemns those who "for a pretense make long prayer." Is my prayer life consistent, and is it real? Am I willing to die rather than miss my regular times of fellowship, communion, and intercession with God Almighty?

People of Prayer

God's Protection

Daniel 6:23-24 shows God's protection over his praying servant Daniel. Daniel gives all the glory to God in his testimony to the king. "My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before Him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt" (Daniel 6:22). Daniel had a clear conscience before his God and before the king.

Daniel 6:23 explains that because of his faith in God, Daniel was not hurt. "...So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God."

Daniel 6:24 shows once again the power of God to overturn the plans of men. Even as Haman was hanged on the very gallows that he prepared for Mordecai, Daniel's enemies were themselves thrown in the lion's den.

> And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.

Proverbs 28:10 says, "Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good things in possession."

People of Prayer

Worldwide testimony

Daniel's prayer life gave a worldwide testimony!

Then King Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth. Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominions shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions (Daniel 6:25-27).

Daniel was faithful in prayer even when endangering his life. His faithfulness led to *all people*, *nations and languages* hearing that God is the living God. His kingdom is forever, and He delivers and rescues even as He did Daniel. Does our consistent obedience ignite a flame that spreads the gospel? How many times does our cautiousness hinder the spread of the gospel?

People of Prayer

Thoughtful Prayer

"...As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart" (Daniel 7:27, 28). God knows the future, and sometimes He chooses to reveal part of the future to praying people. Sometimes that revelation can be deeply troubling. Often, it is to be kept as Daniel did. Daniel kept the matter in his heart.

The word cogitation refers to deep thinking, meditating and contemplating. "When I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches" (Psalm 63:6). Praying people need to think, to consider implications and to examine events in light of prophecy. This will take time, energy and skill.

People of Prayer

Price of Praying

And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days. And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days: afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it (Daniel 8:26, 27).

- Praying has a physical price.
- God sometimes gives us information for us to hold (shut up).
- Holding God's information may drain us emotionally so that there are temporary physical results.
- Our energy level may be depleted until we faint.
- Our resistance may decrease until we are sick.
- Others may not understand.
- The physical price is temporary.
- The value of strong praying is greater than the cost.
- Praying opens understanding as we partner with God's work.
- Praying people are willing to pay the price of prayer and increased understanding.

People of Prayer

Study to Understand

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem (Daniel 9:1, 2).

Darius is the third king under whom Daniel has served, and Daniel is still steadfast in his faith. God and praying people remain the same when governments and laws change. God is faithful; and no matter how this world changes, we need to be faithful to Him.

Daniel 9:2 explains that Daniel's understanding of the number of years of captivity came through study of books. Praying people ought to be readers that study to understand. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

People of Prayer

Seeking God's face

"And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes" (Daniel 9:3). Prayer is how we set our face to seek the face of God! God makes special promises to those who seek Him.

"If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (II Chronicles 7:14).

"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

"The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him" (Lamentations 3:25).

"...Seek ye me, and ye shall live...Seek the Lord, and ye shall live" (Amos 5:4, 6).

"For without faith it is impossible to please Him: for He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

"When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek" (Psalm 27:8).

People of Prayer

Supplication and Fasting

"And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes" (Daniel 9:3). Daniel sought God by prayer and supplications with fasting. Fasting often accompanies prayer in dire situations. In Matthew 17:21 Jesus gives the reason why the disciples were unable to cast out the demon in a child. "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

The Psalmist speaks of humbling himself *through* fasting in Psalm 35:13.

Philippians 4:6 admonishes us, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Then comes the precious promise, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

Are you faced with severe difficulty today? Bring your prayer and supplications before God. Consider fasting as you pray with thanksgiving. God has promised His peace.

People of Prayer

Confession

"And I prayed unto the Lord my God and made my confession..." (Daniel 9:4).

- Prayer includes confession.
- The character of God should be considered in our praying. "...O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep his commandments" (Daniel 9:4).
- Confession may involve sins of society. "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments" (Daniel 9:5).
- Daniel's confession considered the nature of the sin and the cause, "...even by departing from Thy precepts and Thy judgments" (Daniel 9:5).
- Confession of sin includes commission (v.5) and omission (v.6). "Neither have we hearkened unto Thy servants the prophets, which spake in Thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land" (Daniel 9:6).
- Sins of our leaders and ancestors must be dealt with.
- Rejection of Biblical preaching and preacher is sin.

People of Prayer

Confusion

"O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against Thee" (Daniel 9:8). Confusion is often a result of sin! I Corinthians 14:33 reminds us that "...God is not the author of confusion, but of peace...." When feeling confused, remember that this confusion does not come from God. Consider whether through sin you have given the enemy room to work in your life.

Confusion is a call to prayer! The psalmist prayed, "In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be put to confusion" (Psalm 71:1).

People of Prayer

Forgiveness

"To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him" (Daniel 9:9). God has mercy and forgiveness. Even rebels are eligible for help! Do you need forgiveness? Are you praying for those in rebellion towards God? Consider these promises.

- "But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments, And refused to obey, neither were mindful of Thy wonders that Thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not" (Nehemiah 9:16, 17).
- "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).
- "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins unto the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:18).

People of Prayer

Right prayer brings repentance

Daniel 9:10-12 explains the disobedience and the resulting judgment upon the children of Israel. Verse 13 says, "As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us; yet made we not our prayer before the LORD Our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand Thy truth."

- Disobedience brings judgment.
- Judgment is given to cause us to seek the Lord.
- In seeking the Lord, repentance is often the result.
- Repentance brings an understanding of God's truth.

People of Prayer

God's mercies are a foundation for prayer

Daniel turned from confession and repentance to pleading for the Lord's mercies.

Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Thy servant, and His supplications and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open Thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by Thy name: for we do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousnesses, but for Thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God; for thy city and thy people are called by Thy name (Daniel 9:17-19).

We must recognize in prayer that we are unworthy of the Lord giving us our request. His mercies, however, should encourage us to humble ourselves and plead for that which we need. Our righteousness is no reason to pray, but God's mercies are the foundation upon which we pray.

Psalm 136:1 "O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: For His mercy endureth for ever."

Hebrews 4:16 "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

People of Prayer

Things happen when we pray!

And whiles I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation (Daniel 9:20-21).

Sometimes God's answer to our prayer is delayed. We must then be like the persistent widow (Luke 18) and press on until the answer comes. Sometimes though, like this situation, God answers even while we are praying! This must have encouraged Daniel to continue seeking God's face. Have you seen God answer even in the middle of your prayer?

God can do what we think is impossible. Remember when the early church was praying for Peter's release from prison. God answered while they were praying, and they had trouble believing the answer had come. The early church must have felt like the psalmist in Psalm 126:1. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream."

Sometimes God answers even before we pray! "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24).

People of Prayer

Alone in prayer

"Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength" (Daniel 10:8). Sometimes, it is necessary that we be alone in prayer. Daniel was alone.

Often the Lord Jesus sought a place where He could be alone with His Father to pray. He also told us to seek a quiet place to be alone in prayer. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matthew 6:6). Do you have a place where you can be alone in prayer?

People of Prayer

Postures in prayer

Prostrate

"Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground" (Daniel 10:9).

On hands and knees

"And behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands" (Daniel 10:10).

Standing

"And he said unto me, O Daniel a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling" (Daniel 10:11).

There is no one correct posture for prayer. The important thing is to pray!

People of Prayer

Spiritual warfare

Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make thee ungerstand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days. (Daniel 10:12-14.)

- Prayer when heard by God produces results.
- Daniel prayed and fasted for three weeks, but the answer was sent on the first day.
- Spiritual praying may involve warfare in the unseen world.
- Demonic princes resist answers to our prayers getting through.
- God sends help in unseen spiritual war.
- We need to be faithful even when we lack understanding.
- Daniel's prayers and fasting continued through the time of war.

People of Prayer

Spiritual warfare

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand....Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints (Ephesians 6:11-13, 18).

Just as Daniel faced spiritual warfare in praying, we will too. We must take on the whole armor of God and continue steadfast in prayer. God will answer!

Trouble and prayer are closely related to (the) other. Prayer is of great value to trouble. Trouble often drives men to God in prayer, while prayer is but the voice of men in trouble. There is great value in prayer in the time of trouble. Prayer often delivers out of trouble, and still oftener gives strength to bear trouble, ministers comfort in trouble, and begets patience in the midst of trouble. Wise is he in the day of trouble who knows his true source of strength and who fails not to pray (Bounds, Complete Works, 101).

People of Prayer

Wisdom and soul winning

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30).

One of the marks of wisdom is a righteous and an influential life. Is your light shining and bringing others to the light of the knowledge of God? Are you seeing souls won to Christ?

Wisdom comes from knowing God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge..." (Proverbs 1:7). We are told in James 1:5 to ask for wisdom from God if we need it. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." God is the source of all wisdom and will graciously give wisdom to us if we will ask in faith.

"Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Daniel 12:10). In the end, there will be a distinction between saved and lost. The wise will understand, and the wicked will lack understanding.

People of Prayer

Job--worship

Then Job arose, and rent his mantle and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped. And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1:20-21).

Family and possessions are temporary and to be viewed as a stewardship which God can give or take. Job lost oxen, donkeys, sheep, camels and all of his children; yet, he still had his character and maintained a right spiritual condition before God. Job was still able to praise God and to submit to His rule. God had not changed and neither had Job.

Worship involves who God is and what God does. True worship recognizes that God is always right, whether or not we understand what He is doing.

People of Prayer

Job--God rules in man's affairs

Job 12:14 *Breaketh* – "Behold He breaketh down, and it cannot be built again..."

Shutteth-"...He shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening."

Job 12:15 *Withholdeth* – "Behold, He withholdeth the waters and they dry up..."

Sendeth – "...Also He sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth."

Job 12:16 Giver of strength and wisdom – "With Him is strength and wisdom;"

Job 12:17 *Leadeth* – "He leadeth counselors away spoiled..." (also v. 19).

Maketh "...and maketh the judges fools" (also v. 25).

Our God has acted. Our God is acting. Our God shall act. Pray with confidence, and trust God to act on your own behalf!

People of Prayer

Job--God rules in man's affairs

Job 12:18 Looseth - "He looseth the bond of kings..."

 $\label{eq:Girdeth-"...} \textit{and girdeth their loins with a girdle."}$

Job 12:19 Overthroweth - "...overthroweth the mighty."

Job 12:20 *Removeth* – "He removeth away the speech of the trusty."

 $\label{eq:taketh} \textit{Taketh} - \text{``...} \text{and taketh away the understanding} \\ \text{of the aged.'' (also v. 24)}$

Job 12:21 *Poureth* – "He poureth contempt upon princes..."

Weakeneth-"... and weakeneth the strength of the mighty."

Job 12:22 *Discovereth*-- " He discovereth deep things out of darkness..."

Bringeth – "...and bringeth out to light the shadow of death."

Our God is mighty! Trust Him to work on your behalf!

People of Prayer

Job--God rules in man's affairs

Job 12:23 Increaseth - "He increaseth the nations..."

Destroyeth - "...and destroyeth them..."

Enlargeth – "He enlargeth the nations..."

 ${\it Straighteneth-"...} {\it and straighteneth them again."}$

Job 12:24 *Causeth* – "...and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way."

Our God reigns. Will you trust Him to rule and order your affairs? Maybe it would encourage your heart to list what you have seen Him do in your life and the lives of those around you.

People of Prayer

Job--Speaking and Reasoning with God

"Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God" (Job 13:3).

Job approaches God and wants to understand. He wants to reason. In Genesis 18:23, Abraham also reasoned with God on behalf of Lot. "...Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" Abraham asks again in verse 25, "...Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Prayer gives us a way to plead and, yes, to reason with God. It is of utmost importance though that we maintain our absolute trust in God no matter the outcome. Consider Job 13:15, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

People of Prayer

Job--Facing our sin

"How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin" (Job 13:23).

When we are in God's holy presence, we must face our sins. It was when Isaiah was in God's presence that he saw himself as God saw him.

And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts (Isaiah 6:3-5).

We need God's help to see sins we may have been ignorant of, excused, forgotten or overlooked. We find Job repenting at the end of the book, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6).