

From the First Day

In desperate times, Daniel, the prophet, made up his mind to seek the Lord. When he did, God rewarded him with a powerful, encouraging message. “From the first day” that he began to pray, the Lord began to work. And you can take heart in that same encouraging message: God hears your prayers and begins to act upon them from the very first day that you begin to pray.

The name “Daniel” means, “God is my Judge.” His name reminds us that we all do what we do in the sight of God. The prophet, Hanani, once declared that important truth to King Asa: **“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of *them* whose heart is perfect toward him”** (2 Chronicles 16:9). In Proverbs 15:8 we read that **“the prayer of the upright is His delight.”** This is still true today. This is why Paul wrote **“in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us”** (Romans 8:37).

So we have powerful encouragement to seek the Lord by entering into seasons of persistent prayer. Such seasons of prayer have made a significant impact on the nations of the earth throughout history. For instance, consider what happened in the Welsh Revival;

Various accounts have been given of the awakening of Evan Roberts. According to one account, he was present at an address delivered by the Rev. F. B. Meyer at a religious Convention in August, 1903, when a pledge was given by several present, including Roberts, that they would spend a whole day every month praying for a revival.¹

And God sent a revival to Wales.

This is what has happened when God’s people made up their minds to pray. This is especially important to remember right now, because our nation is in a spiritual crisis. Remember, this is not the first time that this has happened in our country. We can learn much from our ancestors who faced times of spiritual deadness. In 1794, the South Carolina Bethel Baptist Association letter addressed a situation much like our own. They wrote,

“... if we live in disobedience, if we backslide in heart and depart from God? Will he not chastise us with the rod of blindness and barrenness? Can we expect anything but a declension? Is it not owing to such conduct that our congregations from year to year complain of coldness and deadness? The truth is, we do not cry to him with sufficient fervency and zeal: we do not plead the promises with sufficient faith: we are too much at our ease: we see cause for lamentation, but we do not lament: It will not be better with us until we alter our conduct and reform our lives.”²

So how could we apply our hearts to the simple message that God hears our prayers and begins to act upon them from the very first day that you and begin to pray? Let’s let Daniel guide us in four seasons of prevailing prayer.

Four Seasons

We can encourage our hearts with Biblical examples from the Book of Daniel. It includes four references to times of desperate prayer.

1. In the first episode, the lives of Daniel and his friends were in danger. They gathered in *corporate prayer* (group prayer) **“that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven.”** The Lord answered, and **“Daniel blessed the God of heaven.”** (Daniel 2:18-19).
2. On another occasion, Daniel alone faced the threat of death. In a foolish decision, the king decreed it to be politically incorrect to pray to anyone but himself for thirty days. How did the man of God respond?

“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)

This shows us the value of consistent *private prayer*. In this season of prevailing prayer, Daniel **“believed in his God.”**³ The Lord delivered him from the lions’ den.

3. In the third season of prevailing prayer, Daniel was burdened for his nation, Israel. On this occasion, his *intercessory prayer* sprang from his understanding of Biblical prophecy. When Daniel understood that Biblical prophecy was being fulfilled, he wrote, **“Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.”** (Daniel 9:3)
4. There is one more reference to a season of prevailing prayer in Daniel chapter 10. **“In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.”** (Daniel 10:2)

There we see the value of *persistent prayer*. Consider the answer that Daniel received:

“Then he said to me, ‘Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.’”⁴ (Daniel 10:12-13)

Carefully consider three phrases from these verses. Each of these was spoken by the heavenly messenger sent by God.

- *“From the first day”* that Daniel set his heart to understand, God heard him. Set your heart on this certainty. You can know that God hears your prayers from the very first day that you begin to pray.

- *“I have come because of your words”* God’s answer came as a direct result of Daniel’s persistent prayer. As New Testament believers, we have even greater confidence about this. We know the Intercessor. Because Jesus gave Himself for our sins, died and rose again, we can make our bold appeals before the throne of grace.⁵ As the Apostle John wrote, *“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”*⁶ Daniel’s answer came because of his prayerful words; your answer will come for the same reason.

- *“But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days”* Make no mistake: prayer is spiritual warfare. This is a reference to the conflict between the demons and the angels. This ongoing clash is the unseen battle behind current events. Those who know how to pray are like the highly trained Special Forces in today’s military. But theirs is a spiritual warfare. By the way, if you truly set your face to seek the Lord, you can expect all kinds of resistance. Take heart from this trouble! You are getting through to God.

A.B. Simpson wrote, “Many of our battles are fought in view of heaven alone. . . Have you not felt, beloved, in some quiet hour, in the secret of your closet that you were going through a decisive battle which no mortal saw? Within the silent walls of your chamber an issue was being decided which would affect all eternity.”⁷

From the very first day that you set your heart to pray, you know that God hears you. One of the greatest privileges you have is to know that the answer comes *“because of your words.”* So enter into this spiritual warfare and persevere in a season of prevailing prayer.

God hears your prayers and begins to act upon them from the very first day that you begin to pray. Why not begin today? Set your heart to seek the Lord, in the full knowledge that, from the very first day, God hears you.

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<https://www.cbcfindlay.org/from-the-first-day/>

¹ W.T. Stead and G. Campbell Morgan, *The Welsh Revival*, Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1905, p.49

² Boles, *Great Revival*, 31, quoting Bethel [S. C.] Baptist Association, Circular Letter, 1802 ([n.p., n.d.]), 6.

³ Daniel 6:23

⁴ Daniel 10:12-13

⁵ Hebrews 4:16

⁶ 1 John 5:14

⁷ A.B. Simpsons, “A Larger Christian Life” p. 169