

Elements of True Prayer

Examining the Prayer of Daniel- Part 1

Tuesday September 15, 2009

Daniel 9:1-19

1 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;

2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:

4 And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;

5 We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments:

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.

7 O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.

8 O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.

9 To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him;

10 Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

11 Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.

12 And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem.

13 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.

14 Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice.

15 And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

16 O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.

17 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.

18 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.

19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; 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.

Background

People ask me all the time, *"How do you know what to preach?"* And I tell them, *"Well, I just spend time in study of God's Word and in prayer and I listen to the Spirit of God while trying to evaluate where I am and where the people of this Church are spiritually. And as the Lord opens up my understanding- it becomes very clear to me what I ought to teach."*

But even though I may struggle at times with what I ought to preach on any given Sunday- there are a few things that all Christians need:

The Acts 2:42

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Here Luke writes that the people of the Church that was flourishing in the Bible had four things common among them:

1. The Apostles Doctrine
2. Godly Fellowship
3. Communion
4. Prayer

1. The Apostle's Doctrine

So a full and correct understanding of three things make up The Apostle's Doctrine:

- A. What God the Holy Spirit actually *said* in that verse or passage?

- B. What God the Holy Spirit *meant* by what He said in that verse or passage?
- C. How may we practically apply the Divine Truth of that verse or passage to our daily lives in the 21st Century?

And the only way that any individual or any Church is going to continue steadfastly in The Apostle's Doctrine is to be involved in deep, serious ongoing, and consistent times of verse by verse; line upon line; and precept upon precept studies of God's Word- along with the correct Doctrinal "glue" that helps to put the pieces of Scripture together so that we may know "how to behave ourselves in the House of God" (**1Timothy 3:15**).

No correct interpretation of any Old Testament verse or passage will in any way differ from that one single interpretation that is given to us through the Revelation of the New Testament. In other words- to fully and correctly and completely understand what God revealed to the 31 writers of the 39 Old Testament Books- we must read the Old Testament "through the lens" of the New Testament. So The Apostle's Doctrine does not negate or discount Old Testament Revelation- but it understands Old Testament Revelation by and through New Testament Revelation.

The reason this is true is because the New Testament is a *superior* Revelation. The Old Testament is from God and is fully inspired- but the Old Testament is incomplete- fulfilled only by and through the Lord Jesus Christ- Who is finally and fully and completely revealed through the New Testament. Another way of looking at this is that The Promises of God were given through the Revelation of the Old Testament while the fulfillment of those Promises are found in the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the New. Looking at Scripture in that way will allow you to acquire The Apostle's Doctrine.

2. Godly Fellowship

Godly fellowship as opposed to just fellowship. The two are not the same. Spending time with someone and talking about work or business or sports or politics may be in some way helpful and constructive- but it is not what Luke was talking about.

The kind of fellowship that Luke wrote about in **The Acts 2:42** and which was a hallmark of the early Church was *Godly* Fellowship. Times of gathering together along the lines of edifying one another in the word or through personal testimony. The noted Puritan Theologian, Matthew Henry writes this about this kind of fellowship:

"They kept up the *communion of saints*. They continued *in fellowship* (v. [42](#)), and *continued daily with one accord in the temple*, v. [46](#). They not only had a mutual affection to each other, but a great deal of mutual conversation with each other; they were much together. When they withdrew from *the untoward* generation, they did not turn hermits, but were very intimate with one another, and took all occasions to meet;

wherever you saw one disciple, you would see more, like *birds of a feather*. See how these Christians love one another. They were concerned for one another, sympathized with one another, and heartily espoused one another's interests. They had fellowship with one another in religious worship. They met *in the temple*: there was their rendezvous; for joint-fellowship with God is the best fellowship we can have with one another, **1 John 1:3**. Observe, (1.) They were daily in the temple, not only on the days of the sabbaths and solemn feasts, but on other days, every day. Worshipping God is to be our daily work, and, where there is opportunity, the oftener it is done publicly the better. God loves the gates of Zion, and so must we. (2.) They were *with one accord*; not only no discord nor strife, but a great deal of holy love among them; and they heartily joined in their public services. Though they met with the Jews in the courts of the temple, yet the Christians kept together by themselves, and were unanimous in their separate devotions."¹

3. The Breaking of Bread

The "breaking of bread" is Communion (The Lord's Supper). The early Church engaged in Communion often as a remembrance of Jesus. Communion was given at Church; in the individual homes of believers; in the market place and in places where they kept the sick (hospitals). Believers kept Communion.

4. Prayers

Prayer is what distinguished the early Church from every other institution on earth. When God's people prayed- God moved; things changed; and answers came. Prayer is the aroma of God's Church- in fact- the Church should be known as "The House of Prayer". So prayer will always be a huge part of the Christian Church until it is finally swallowed up in everlasting praise in Heaven.

So, I do not believe we can ever overemphasize the need and the value of prayer. And I think the longer we study the Word of God- the more we're going to come back to prayer because it is a repeated theme throughout all of Scripture. And I personally believe that this passage here in **Daniel 9:1-19** is perhaps the greatest Old Testament passage on prayer. And I don't mean by that that it gives us instruction on *how* to pray. But it models for us what prayer really is in a majestic and fulfilling way.

Now there may be other passages in Scripture that are the *equal* of **Daniel 9**- but I do not personally know whether there are any that *surpasses* it. It doesn't teach us about prayer by precept. It teaches us about prayer by letting us in on somebody actually praying. And that's really the best way to learn. And so what I want you to do is to couple this model prayer with the model prayer of the Lord Jesus in **Matthew 6** and see how the two will come together in your thinking to reinforce what the Spirit of God has already taught us all about prayer so far.

¹ (from Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, PC Study Bible Formatted Electronic Database Copyright © 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All Rights reserved.)

Daniel set for us a standard of spiritual excellence in almost every conceivable area. Daniel was truly a remarkable man. The level of commitment and dedication that Daniel had were very unlike even the best of other men. He stood head and shoulders above everybody around him- even the most committed- like his three friends- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

There was just something about Daniel that was head and shoulders above all other men. And as he has modeled for us a standard of spiritual excellence in so many other areas that we shouldn't be surprised that he would model for us in the area of prayer, as well.

All throughout this Book- Daniel is seen as being uncompromising; bold; full of faith; unselfish; humble; completely resistant to the world around him; and persistent in his commitment to God. This Book shows us a man who is holy; incorruptible; consistent in his living style; trustworthy; virtuous; obedient; and worshipful. And now we find here that he is also a man of prayer. He is so much a man of prayer- that Chapter 6 tells us that he wouldn't stop praying- even though it meant that he would be thrown into the den of lions. So Daniel was certainly a man of prayer.

And here in **Daniel 9** he models for us that he was a man with a very deep sense of his own sinfulness. He had a very deep and profound understanding of his own inherent wickedness. And in this prayer- Daniel shows us eight elements that make up true prayer:

True Prayer is:

1. Generated by the Word of God
2. Grounded in God's Will
3. Characterized by Fervency
4. Realized Through Self Denial
5. Identified With God's People
6. Strengthened Through the Confession of Sin
7. Dependant on God's Character
8. Completed in God's Glory

So here in chapter 9- Daniel prays. And as we carefully examine his prayer- we find in it these eight elements of true intercessory prayer. It's a message that can stand alone apart from the **Book of Daniel**, as a "treatise" on prayer in and of itself. And, yet, this passage has a wonderful link with the whole of Scripture and the total context of all 66 Books. Let me show you how.

The Biblical Context

First of all- there is a Biblical context that I want you to note. **Daniel 9** includes a prayer and it also includes an answer. The prayer is a prayer regarding 70 years- while the answer is an answer regarding 70 *weeks* of years. The prayer is

a prayer for Restoration while the answer is the answer of ultimate Restoration in the coming of the Messiah. So this chapter is divided into two parts:

1. The Prayer
2. The Answer

And while the prayer occurred at one point in time- one particular day in the life of a man named Daniel- the answer extends all throughout the entire Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Leaving End Time Prophecy

Most when most people read or study **Daniel 9**- they go directly to the "70 weeks prophecy"- the prophecy that says that from the rebuilding of the city to the coming of the Messiah will be a certain period of time. And following that, there will be another seven-year period of time, and then the Messiah, the Prince, will come, and this great Messianic prophecy occupies the attention of most people who study **Daniel 9**- for good reason.

But that's also a mistake because that prophecy is only the *answer* to Daniel's prayer. But it is the actual prayer of Daniel that is the main part of this Chapter- not the answer. In fact, there are twice as many verses given to the prayer as there is to its answer. Now keep in mind that Prophecy is very important- but it cannot and it must not ever be a substitute for prayer. God never calls anyone to be so attracted to the future that we lose sight of the present. And that's the essence of the significance of the prayer.

Some Background of Daniel 9

Now, God has already given to Daniel the entire prophetic sweep of Gentile history. But in this chapter- God reveals to Daniel the future of Israel's history. And so this one man in the Old Testament is granted by the Spirit of God the understanding of all both the entire sweep of Gentile history as well as the great and glorious climax of Jewish history, as well.

By the time Chapter 9 rolls around- Daniel has already heard that Israel will suffer- and that Israel will suffer during the time of the pagan Gentile domination; and that Jerusalem will be trodden down (Antiochus Epiphanes- a particularly evil Roman antichrist came in and slaughtered the people of Israel in 167 BC.)

But now the final result of that is going to not be negative- but positive for, ultimately, the Prince Himself will come and set up His Kingdom. And so Daniel is given understanding of the entirety of all Gentile history and, ultimately, what God is going to do with Israel, as well.

And that comes to a great climax here in **Daniel 9**.

Now, there is a flow here that we need to understand because in **Daniel 8:27**- we find that Daniel, was sick and astonished at what he saw.

Daniel 8:27

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.

Seeing the entirety of Gentile history and the terrible oppression of the people of Israel made him sick and faint.

Physically, Daniel was bearing a burden that was just too hard for him to carry- and it caused him to physically collapse. And then as you move into Chapter 9- from the point of physical weakness- Daniel comes full circle- to a point of great spiritual compassion.

It is his brokenness over what is going to happen to Israel, as revealed in Chapter 8, that makes Chapter 9 flow so easily because here Daniel begins to pray on the behalf of Israel. And knowing what will happen- his prayer flows- and that is why the Spirit of God has placed Chapter 9 after Chapter 8.

The Historical Setting of Daniel's Prayer

Daniel 9:1

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;

Now this verse tells us just when all the events of Chapter 9 actually occurred- in the first year of Darius. Now this is the same Darius that we find in Chapter 6- and since this is the first year of Darius- we can see that the events of **Daniel 9** take us all the way back to the same period of time as **Daniel 6**.

So from the information that Daniel gives us in **Daniel 9:1** about the time frame- we know that this prayer must have happened around the same time as the lion's den experience of **Daniel 6**. So the prayer life of Daniel that is described here in **Daniel 9** is connected with all the things that he was praying about in Chapter 6- all in the face of potential disaster, and even risking his life in a lion's den.

Now most Bible scholars teach that Darius was just another name for Cyrus- the first great monarch of the Medo-Persian Empire. The Babylonian Empire ended in Chapter 5 with the terrible feast of Belshazzar. It was a drunken orgy and in the midst of that wickedness- there was supernatural handwriting appearing on the wall- pronouncing God's Judgment:

Daniel 5:24-28

24 Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written.

25 And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

26 This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

27 TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

28 PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

So from this Judgment- the Medes and the Persians came in and set up their own kingdom, and the *first* phase of pagan Gentile power moved out. Now the second phase moved in- which was the Medo-Persian Empire- and it was ruled by a man named, Cyrus.

The word, "Darius" is not a name- but a title and it is translated as "the holder of the scepter" and is similar to other titles of nobility like "king" or "monarch" or "pharaoh" or even "sovereign".

The Bible tells us that this Darius was the son of Ahasuerus. The problem is that there were many kings in the Medo-Persian time frame- who took the name, "Ahasuerus". It was such a common name that we really don't have any idea who this is. But it also tells us that he was of the seed of the Medes.

Now, Cyrus was a Persian. But as the ruler of the Medo-Persian Empire- he would have been given status as if he was the seed of the Medes, as well. So by ruling over the Medo-Persian Empire- Cyrus could have legally laid claim that he was descended from both the Medes and the Persians and, therefore, commend himself to both groups of people who were joined together in that Empire.

Now also notice that **Daniel 9:1** says that Darius

... was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans.

Now the "realm of the Chaldeans" was a territory or province of ancient Babylon. So the Medes and the Persians had their territory. And when they conquered Babylon- they took over the area of the Babylonians- who were also called, "the Chaldeans". So the ruler would then take his legal descent and identity from both the Medes and the Persians so that he might be more acceptable to both groups. And this is the individual that we know as Darius- who is best understood as Cyrus- the first ruler.

Now, the dates of this man's reign vary from 536 BC to 539 BC. And around that time- Daniel would have been around 80 years old- or older. So he's been around for a long time. And you remember that the Bible says that when Daniel was first carried off into Babylon- he was a teenager. So if he had been carried off into captivity at about 14 or 15 years- he would have been there now 65 years or longer.

We also have to remember that Daniel was famous. And even though the great Babylonian Empire had passed away into the ash bin of history- Daniel still maintained his position in the palace- and the Medes and the Persians all heard about this amazing man- who could tell them about their dreams.

This amazing man who- in the lion's den- had been able to withstand the fury of wild beasts. So these people looked at Daniel as being a very incredible and important man.

There's no question that the Medes and the Persians understood the godly character of this man. And now as a man of great years- Daniel would be a man of great wisdom because in that culture- wisdom comes through years of living and in their mind- only time can add to that which comes from the Law of God.

So Daniel was a special instrument of God during the first year of Darius.
Now look at verse 2:

Daniel 9:2

In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

So here is Daniel- 80 years old or older- having been in that pagan land now for 65- 68 years and he is doing what every man of God does- he is reading the Word of God. You see, just because Daniel received Divine Revelation directly from God; just because he was an instrument through which God revealed future events; that in no way removed his responsibility and his joy to be a student of the Word of God.

Nothing ever takes that responsibility away. Nothing. And so Daniel was involved in reading the "books" of Scripture- or the "scrolls" of Scripture.

...to be continued