

# Elements of True Prayer

## Examining the Prayer of Daniel- Part 2

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Tuesday September 22, 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.

## **The Historical Context- continued from last week**

Let's look again at verse 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.**

Now it is apparent by this statement here that the Jews are in exile in Babylon, and they had been there in exile for all these years- and they had no doubt brought together Scrolls of the Old Testament Law and the Writings and the Prophets with them. And they had compiled them together to make up the Old Testament Books or the Books of God.

It is possible that they had been copied by certain scribes in the exile and were made available. And no doubt Daniel had a set of these Books. And among other things, these Books included the **Prophecy of Jeremiah**. And Jeremiah wrote two Old Testament Books- the **Book of Jeremiah** and **Lamentations**. Jeremiah was the "weeping prophet" and that's what Lamentations means.

And so Jeremiah had prophesied prior to the captivity. And Jeremiah had been told by God to write down his prophecy. He did it once, and it was destroyed. So Jeremiah had to rewrite his Book of Prophecy a second time- and so the writing of Jeremiah would have been available to Daniel.

Now, as Daniel was reading in **Jeremiah**- he was reading two passages. Let me show them to you. He was reading along in Jeremiah, and he read this:

**Jeremiah 25:11&12**

**11 And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.**

**12 And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.**

Now, as Daniel was reading- he began to understand,

“God says that the desolation of Jerusalem is to last seventy years.”

...so that tells us that Daniel was either reading this prophecy in **Jeremiah 25** or **29**. Because in **Jeremiah 29:10**- you find the very same prophecy:

### **Jeremiah 29:10**

**For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.**

Now try to get the picture. Daniel is reading along in Jeremiah and he comes to this remarkable prophecy. And he believes without a shadow of a doubt that it is the inspired Word of God and he makes the tremendous discovery that seventy years is determined for the captivity. And you don't have to be a mathematical genius to figure out that he knew he'd already been in captivity at least 65 to 68 years. So from that- Daniel knew that the captivity that he was in right at that moment was soon to end

Now Daniel had longed for the end of Judah's captivity. He had longed to see God's people restored to their land. And he knew now from the Scriptures that it was about time for that to happen. So based on his understanding of the Promise that God made in the Word of God- Daniel began to pray. So that is the historical concept of this moment.

### **The Spiritual Context**

Now I want to show you the spiritual side to this. I want you to see something of the heart attitude of Daniel as he comes before God. And all I need to say about that is in verses 3 and 4.

**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;**

Now, what do you see here about Daniel's attitude? What do you see about the spiritual context? First of all, in verse 3- there is great humility. In verse 4-

there is a confession of sin. Also in verse 4 is reverence- so these are the three proper attitudes of effective prayer:

1. Humility
2. Confession of Sin
3. Reverence

To come with that kind of a heart to seek God is always effective. The burden of Daniel's prayer was his own sinfulness combined with God's great and awesome Majesty.

### **The Prayer Itself**

Since we now understand the Biblical, Historical, and Spiritual contexts of this moment- we now need to look at the prayer itself. And as we go through this prayer- we will find eight things that tell us about the nature of true intercessory 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

And these are principles you can write down in your Bible or write down on a sheet of paper so you may remember them and memorize them because they are timeless. They go on through all ages to govern and guide our communion with God. So let's begin to look at each one.

#### **1. Effective Prayer is Generated by the Word of God**

**Daniel 9:2&3**

**<sup>2</sup> 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.**

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

Daniel's prayer was born out of a correct understanding of the Word of God. So we may conclude that the kind of prayer that honors God and the kind of prayer that God answers is the prayer that flows out of the study and the proper comprehension of the Word of God. Because, unless we understand the Word of God- we will not understand the Purposes and the Plans and the Will of God so that this understanding may govern and guide our prayers. Without the Word of God guiding our prayers- all we have left is human emotion. It was when Daniel saw the Plan of God that he began his prayer. It was when Daniel perceived what God had in mind- that he began to commune with God.

In fact Daniel even believed that his prayer was an element in the fulfillment of the Word of God itself. On the one hand, Daniel recognized with certainty the Divine Purpose of God. Daniel believed utterly and absolutely and totally in the Sovereignty of God. And Daniel believed that the Writings of Jeremiah was the Word of the Lord and he knew it would never be altered or defeated. It would never be changed. God will fulfill His Word. And that firm and solid knowledge of God's Omnipotent Sovereignty that came from a correct understanding of God's Word- caused Daniel to pray.

## **Human Reasoning Versus Divine Truth**

Now, human reason would say this:

Okay- Jeremiah says that the captivity will be seventy years, and God always fulfills His Word, right? So what are you going to pray for? It's already cut and dried. Seventy years of captivity and it will be over. So there's no reason to pray.

And that is the typical response of carnal human reason. It doesn't make sense to pray and ask God to do something that He has already said He was going to do. But notice that that is not Daniel's response. Daniel prayed precisely because he *did* know what God's Will was by reading the Word.

## **The Mystery Between Prayer and Sovereignty**

This teaches us that even though we don't fully understand the relationship of prayer on the human level to Sovereignty on the Divine level- our example is that Daniel somehow felt the responsibility to pray because God is Sovereign. And that's really the issue.

We will never fully comprehend the relationship between God and Man. I don't understand it on any level. I don't understand how God can get together with Man on anything. I don't understand how God can write the Bible and men can be used as instruments. I don't understand how God can become a Man and still be God at the same time. I do not understand how God can do His Sovereign Work- and my prayers play any part at all. But simply because I don't have the mental ability or the intellectual strength to comprehend those things does not in any way

make them to not be true. The Bible teaches that they are all true- and that's enough.

But when Daniel read and understood the Plan of God- rather than becoming fatalistic about it and slamming shut the scroll, and saying, *"Well, that's that. There is no more for me to do because it's almost over."* He went immediately to his knees in brokenness and penitence and cried out to God in sackcloth and ashes on the behalf of his people- that God would do precisely what His Word says that He will do.

Now look at Daniel's request. You have to look real hard because Daniel doesn't just go straight to his request- but he spends a lot of time confessing sin and praising God. The request isn't found until way down in verse 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.**

Human reasoning would ask, *"Why does Daniel pray that way? I mean God's Word already says that He's going to do it- so why pray?"* But Daniel's not interested in being a logical, reasoning human- he is simply pouring out his heart. Carnality would ask, *"Why? Why should we pray after we find out God's Purposes in His Word?"* Certainly not because God needs our prayers to do it- but simply because we need to line up with God's Causes. You see, prayer is not for God- prayer is for us. God gave us the gift of prayer- because He doesn't need it. Prayer is used by God to help our hearts line up with His Causes. In prayer we see our sinfulness and in prayer we see the need of His Grace and Power. And through prayer- we submit ourselves to His plan.

So prayer and the Word are inseparably linked. I don't think you can pray properly unless you're in the Word of God. Conversely- you cannot properly study the Word of God without being in prayer.

The longest Psalm, **Psalm 119**, expresses this issue in at least two ways:

**Psalms 119:24**

**Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.**

In other words, when God's people read God's Word- the Testimonies of the Lord become our Counselor. They become that which instructs our minds. And that's utterly necessary if we are to pray according to God's Will.

**Psalms 119:99&100**

**99 I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.**

**100 I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.**

In other words, the Psalmist is simply saying,

“If I want to get in on Your Plans, if I want to understand Your precepts- then I have to commit myself to Your Word. And then when I am in prayer- I won't be praying for God to change what He's already revealed to be His Will.”

This is how we identify ourselves with God's Plans. Prayer and the Word are inseparably linked together because there is no way that we can pray in union with God's Plans unless we understand what His Word says about those Plans.

## **The Apostle John**

### **The Revelation 22:7a**

**Behold, I come quickly...**

When Jesus made this announcement to John- what did John do? He prayed. What did he pray?

### **The Revelation 22:20b**

**... Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.**

But why did John pray that way? Didn't Jesus just say that He was going to come quickly? And if it is God's Will that Jesus come quickly- why did John pray-

**"Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus"?**

But, John would answer that question by saying,

“By praying that way- I am identifying and agreeing with my need for Him to come.”

So this kind of praying is a point of identification with the revealed Purpose and Plan of God. So we can see that understanding the Word properly and effective prayer go together wonderfully and beautifully.

## **Ezra and Nehemiah**

Ezra prayed like this:

### **Ezra 9:4**

**Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.**

So after Ezra understood the Word of God to the point that he gathered all those who trembled at it and he sat astonished at what it said- what did he do? He prayed!

### **Ezra 9:5-15**

**5** And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God.

**6** And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.

**7** Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day.

**8** And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage.

**9** For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem.

**10** And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments,

**11** Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness.

**12** Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever.

**13** And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this;

**14** Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?

**15** O LORD God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this.

So when these people understood the Law of God- they began to tremble and Ezra sat down in a stupor at what the Word of God said. And this reaction to what God's Word taught is what prompted Ezra's prayer.

You will find Nehemiah in a similar situation:

### **Nehemiah 8:1-6**

**1** And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.

**2** And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.



**3 And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.**

**4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam.**

**5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:**

**6 And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.**

Then Chapter 9:1&2 tells us that as a result of their having a correct understanding of God's Word they:

**1 ... assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them.**

**2 And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.**

To be continued...