

Elements of True Prayer- Part 3

Tuesday September 29, 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.

Last week- we saw that here in Daniel's prayer- we can see eight elements that make up the kind of intercessory prayer that God answers. 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 let's examine each one of these elements.

1. True Prayer is Generated by the Word of God

Daniel 9:2&3

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:

What this passage teaches us is that a proper understanding of the Word of God drives saved people to prayer. Daniel was moved to pray precisely because he read what God said about the Captivity in the Book of Jeremiah. Daniel's prayer was birthed by his understanding of God's Word. If you can read the Word of God and not be driven to prayer- then you're either not listening to what you're reading or else you are grossly misinterpreting what you are reading.

Whatever you read in God's Word should be the catalyst or the cause for three things:

1. For the confession of sin in your life
2. For the praise and gratitude to God for the blessedness in your life
3. For thankfulness for the Plan of God that's unfolding in, by, and through your life

That's why in **The Acts 6**- Deacons were first appointed in the Church- so that the Apostles could give themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word- because prayer and the study of God's Word go together.

The Acts 6:1-4

1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

For another illustration of just how prayer and the study of God's Word go hand in hand- look at what the Apostle Paul said in **Ephesians 3**:

1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward:

3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.
13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.
14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,
16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;
17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,
18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;
19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.
20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,
21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Paul said in verse 14 that the "cause" for which he bowed his knees in prayer was the "**revelation of the mystery**" of the knowledge of Christ in verses 3&4. So once again from this we see that a correct understanding of the Word of God generates prayer.

When God's Word speaks about God- when it give us information about God's Character and God's Majesty and God's Love and God's Power- a holy longing to commune with God is created in the heart of all true believers. When God's Word speaks of blessing- we long to praise. When it speaks of Glory- we long to receive it. When it speaks of Promise- we long to realize it and hold it and possess it. When it speaks of Sin- we long to confess it. When it speaks of Judgment and Wrath- we long to avoid it. And when it speaks of Hell- we are moved to pray for lost souls.

So a full and correct understanding of the Word of God is the cause of true prayer. And just because we know that something is inevitable; that something is God's Will- doesn't mean that we feel relieved to get up off our knees and walk away in some kind of sick indifference. Daniel's prayer here- like all true prayer- is birthed out of a study and a correct understanding of the Word of God. That is what creates our prayer life and shapes it.

2. True Prayer is Grounded in God's Will

All true prayer is generated by God's Word and all true prayer is grounded in God's Will. Now in **Daniel 9:2**- Daniel says that,

... 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.

Here Daniel is saying, "I know the Word of the Lord through Jeremiah says it will be seventy years during which Jerusalem will be desolate." So from his study of God's Word- the time of the Jewish captivity in Babylon was clearly revealed to Daniel. But even after he understood this- there is absolutely no sign of resignation on the part of Daniel.

On the contrary- it was precisely because he knew what was God's Will that caused Daniel to pray. Daniel believed that his prayers were a very important element of the fulfillment of God's Will.

You see, God's people identify with God's Will. I don't ever pray, and I don't think anyone ever should pray as if we were changing the Will of God. No, we all should pray so as to line our hearts up with God's Will. And God's Will is always to bless those who are obedient to His Word.

Another Biblical illustration that addresses this very issue is found in **The Revelation 6:9-11:**

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

Here we find some souls under the altar in Heaven. And these souls are the martyrs- who have lost their lives for Jesus. And these souls are crying out,

How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

In other words- "*How long will evil have its way?*" But why would these souls in Heaven pray this way? They already know how long it was going to be. It was going to be three-and-a-half years. It's all over the Bible.

So even though they had no doubt read Daniel's prophecies many times while they were alive and even though they no doubt had full understanding of the writings of the New Testament and even though this correct understanding of God's Word caused them to know all of what God had planned for that time of "Jacob's Trouble"- that seven years- and that three-and-a-half years of Great Tribulation- even though they fully knew exactly how long it was going to be until God avenged their blood- there was still the longing in their heart that it would end now.

So these souls were identifying with the injustice being done to God, and they hungered and thirsted that God's Will would be done quickly- even though they already knew God's Will about this- and they prayed accordingly.

Here is another example-

1 Samuel 12:19

And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.

The children of Israel had lusted to be like the other nations of the world and get a human king to rule over them- even though God was their King. And so they got themselves a king- a tall, good-looking king- who was a loser. They got just what they asked for. But after that- they asked Samuel-

... Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.

And Samuel said unto the people,

1 Samuel 12:20b-25

20 ... Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart;

21 And turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain.

22 For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.

23 Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way:

24 Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you.

25 But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

Now why did Samuel say that the Lord will not forsake His people? For their sake? No, for His Own Namesake.

... because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.

So Samuel was saying- *"Yes, repent- but do not fear. Hang in there, because God will never forsake His Own people."* But now look:

Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way:

Now why did Samuel say that? What is there to pray for? He just said that God will never forsake them. He just said that God established a covenant with them- that God has His Own Name and Reputation and Personal Integrity at stake in the keeping of the covenant.

So what is there to pray about? That is what the natural mind would ask.

Samuel prayed because he was identifying with God's Will for the people that they will live within the Covenant as blessed people. Then he says in verses 24&25:

24 Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you.

25 But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king. Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you.

Now this is a very strange statement. On the one hand- Samuel tells them that God won't forsake His Covenant. But then on the other hand- he tells them that they could all die (**be consumed**). So the only way to understand this is that individuals who sin would miss the Promises- even though God will be faithful to the nation as a whole.

The point that I want you to see in this is simply that Samuel- even though he fully knew the Will of God to be inevitable- still recognized that a failure to pray about it was sinful. Now, there is great mystery in just how all this works together- but the main thing I want you to see is that this is how we should react.

So the great lesson in all of this is:

After we know God's Will- (through the reading and studying of God's Word) we need to pray consistently with God's Will and not grow complacent in our prayers because we know what God's Will is.

...to be continued