

# Elements of True Prayer- Part 4

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Tuesday October 6, 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.

We are studying Daniel's prayer and from this prayer- we can see that there are eight elements that comprise it. 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

## **2. Prayer is Grounded in God's Will-** (continued from last week)

So as you study Daniel's prayer here- you should get to a place where you will never pray for God to change His Will. God's people should not even desire what God doesn't want to give us. We should only want His Will to be done. And we must work very hard so that that attitude does not become some kind of passive resignation. This is not theological reservation. Remember it is the knowledge of what God's will is- that should teach us how to pray. So we should only seek after and pray for that which is God's Will.

For example- we all know that Jesus is coming back to this earth. And from Scripture- we also know that Jesus is going to come at the exact hour the Father determined that He would come. And yet even though that Will of God is crystal clear- the Scriptures also implore us to pray- *"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"*

Even Jesus was no fatalist. Jesus was going to the Cross and he knew full well that He had come to this earth for that reason- to die on the Cross. So Jesus knew it was God's Will and yet in the Garden- Jesus prayed- *"Father, let this cup pass from Me."*

But we need to know that Jesus was not a coward; He was not afraid to die. He prayed this way because He was rebelling against sin. He rebelled against the consequence of fallen Man. He rebelled against the single most spectacular sin that has ever been committed and that ever will be committed- the killing of Jesus. He rebelled against the evil of it- but then he resigned Himself to His Father's Will and prayed in the very next breath, *"Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done."*

You see, to pray for God's Will is to pray that God will be honored and glorified and lifted up in whatever occurs. And so we pray as it's *generated* from the Word of God and as it's *grounded* in the Will of God.

### 3. True Prayer is Characterized by Fervency

Prayer, then, is generated by God's Word, grounded in God's will, and Prayer is characterized by fervency.

#### **Daniel 9:3**

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

Daniel didn't pray like two ships passing in the night. *"Lord, by the way, I got this little thought I want to drop on You while I'm passing by."* That's the way so many pray today- but Daniel set his face unto the Lord God to seek God in four ways:

1. Prayer
2. Supplication
3. Fasting
4. Sackcloth and Ashes

In other words- he didn't just take a passing nod at God. He fixed his gaze on the Lord God. There was a passion. There was a persistence. There was an intensity in his prayer. And he fixed his gaze to seek God by:

Prayer	Crying out to God
Supplications	Extended times of petitioning God
Fasting	Going without food
Sackcloth and Ashes	Humble repentance

And he did all this AFTER he already knew what God's Will was!

Now many in our day would say at this point- *"Daniel, this is a little ridiculous. I mean God has already showed you in the Bible that your captivity is going to be ended in just a few more years- so what in the world are you getting so upset about? God said seventy years. It's a done deal. Let's go rejoice. Why are you fasting and praying and repenting?"*

But there's a seriousness in Daniel that we need to emulate. The Bible says to pray without ceasing, and this is about as persistent as a human can get.

### **Luke 11:5-13**

**5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;**

**6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?**

**7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.**

**8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.**

**9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.**

**10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.**

**11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?**

**12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?**

**13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?**

What the Lord is saying here is that if a man who runs a bakery, is going to give you bread for your much banging- what do you think God is going to do when you pray with great persistence?

### **The Mystery**

Now this is a great mystery- but God has created prayer in such a way that somehow- when we pray according to the Word of God and in accord with the Will of God- we become a part of God's Plan to cause His Word and His Will to come to pass.

### **James 5:16b**

**... The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.**

Now, the "much" here is not the changing of God's Will or God's Plan. But the "much" that "avails" here is us. We must remember that the great and eternal value of prayer is what it does for us- not what it does to God. Prayer changes things only in these sense that prayer changes us.

So Daniel prayed with Fervency- **"unto the Lord God."** Now what is interesting is that here Daniel does not use the Name, "Yahweh"- but rather, "Adonai", which means, "Lord; Master; or Sovereign". So Daniel is praying here in submission to the Authority and the Sovereignty of God.

And yet even after Daniel realized that God is utterly Sovereign and utterly Authoritarian- Daniel:

**... set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:**

Now as we have noted before- Daniel didn't just pray a quick- "Lord forgive and help me" kind of prayer and then move on- but he lingered in this prayer for a long time. And even in verse 20, he says,

**20 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;**

**21 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**

**22 And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.**

**23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.**

We don't know how long it was going on- but Daniel prayed and he prayed and, while he was speaking and praying and confessing and presenting his supplication- finally, Gabriel touched him...

## **Fight To Persist in Prayer**

And so we see that there is a constancy in Daniel's prayer. And this is hard for us. We live in a microwave culture that seeks and expects instant gratification. Modern America generates thinking patterns in that way. The result is that our attention spans are very limited. We watch television programs that solve every conceivable problem of life in 30 minutes with three commercials. We listen to one little song that lasts only about three minutes. We watch a 60-second commercial that tells us how to live our lives and what to buy. We live life in little short spurts. And the art of slow steady meditation on God's Word and long term persistence in prayer has almost become a lost art. And we are going to have to fight very hard to recover this Biblical pattern of life.

But while we are so impatient and so eager to "go on" to the next thing- Daniel was one who gave himself to prayer with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

And for what? To confess his sin? I mean, how could a godly man like Daniel get that upset about his sin? And where does that leave us? If Daniel was that upset about his sin even though he lived a life filled with prayer, fasting, and repenting- then where do we fit in with that?

## **1 Timothy 1:15**

**This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.**

How could Paul say that about himself? And if this is true about Paul- where do we fit in? From our vantage point- we say, "That's just ridiculous". But from his vantage point- Paul perceived sin in all of its heinousness and from his mind- it was a reality.

And so Daniel employs every indication of persistence. He uses every possible act of humiliation as he comes before the Heavenly Throne with the petition upon his heart. He wears sackcloth. Now commonly, in the Old Testament- sackcloth was a sign of deep humiliation. Pouring ashes on the head was another sign.

## **Job 2:3-10**

**3 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.**

**4 And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.**

**5 But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.**

**6 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.**

**7 So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.**

**8 And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.**

**9 Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.**

**10 But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.**

I believe the Lord is calling us to prayer. We are living in powerful days- days of great change and most of that change is evil and wicked. The Covenant of Peace Church is constantly under attack. I'm constantly under attack from unbelievable sources that you would be surprised to even know about. This is just part and parcel of obeying God and being faithful. We struggle in the spiritual area with the families in our Church. We struggle financially trying to meet all the needs. We have many battles- and I really believe that it's easy for people to sit in this Church with all that we have around us and say to themselves, *"It's all going so well- so surely nobody needs my prayers!"* But I beg you to pray for me and this Church- that we will be found faithful and that God's Word will have success.

You know- that is God's Will- that we all are found faithful and so because we know that to be true- because we know that is God's Word and God's Will- that is

how we should pray. And we also know it is God's will that His Word have success-. So since we know that is God's Will- God has instituted prayer so that we will pray accordingly. So:

- ✓ Will you be faithful to pray?
- ✓ Will you pray as a result of knowing God's Word?
- ✓ Will you pray in accord with God's Will?
- ✓ Will you persevere in Prayer so you can see the answer?

To be continued....