

# Elements of True Prayer

## Examining the Prayer of Daniel- Part 5

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Tuesday October 13, 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.**

So we have covered two very important elements of prayer so far in our study of Daniel's prayer:

- ✓ True prayer springs forth from a correct and full understanding of the Word of God
- ✓ True prayer is always in accord with God's Will

Prayer that does not naturally flow out of a full and proper understanding of God's Word could hardly be called genuine prayer- it is simply human desire. Many times- we want something- so we ask God to give it to us- regardless of what His Word says and regardless of what His Will is. Although we do that quite frequently- that is not really prayer- that is simply a want or a lust. And we justify those kinds of wants by this logic:

- Since we want it- it must be what God wants for us
- Since it seems good to us- therefore it must seem good to God

So we have seen from Daniel that true prayer- the kind of prayer that honors God and the kind of prayer that God answers should be motivated; led; inspired; brought forth; and encouraged by what we read and understand from God's written Word.

In verse 2- Daniel read what God told the prophet Jeremiah about the captivity of Israel. Once Daniel clearly understood what God's Word said about their captivity- he began to pray to that end:

**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:**

Daniel's comprehension of what God's Word actually said motivated him to pray. So Daniel teaches us that genuine prayer to God must flow out from God's Word. So if we are to pray like this- it is vital that we spend time in God's Word so that we will know what God's Word says.

Secondly, as we study Daniel's prayer- we should get to a place where we 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. Why would a child of God ever pray in rebellion to the Will of God? And why would a child of God ever want anything that is not God' Will?

But as we pray in accord with God's Will- we must also work very hard so that this attitude does not become some kind of passive resignation. Praying in accord with God's Will is not theological reservation. On the contrary- 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.

Now as we continue to study this wonderful prayer of Daniel- we must remember that this is the only prayer of Daniel that is of any substance that we have a record of- and it is a masterful one. And we see from verses 20 through 27- the answer to his prayer:

#### **Daniel 9:20-27**

**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.**

**24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.**

**25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and**

**threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.**

**26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.**

**27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.**

So as God the Holy Spirit saw the need to record this prayer for us in Holy Scripture- this prayer became inspired and is now part of the Holy Bible and as Scripture- this prayer is:

**2 Timothy 3:16&17**

**16 ... profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:**

**17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.**

So, because of that- this prayer becomes a model prayer for us. Now Daniel never meant his prayer to be a model for our prayer- he was simply praying- but God took this prayer and included it in the Canon of Scripture. So this prayer- along with every other prayer in the Bible- can be used to teach us how to pray today.

The great 19th Century Evangelist, Dwight Moody said,

"Those who have left the deepest impression on this sin-cursed earth have been men and women of prayer."

Robert Murray McShane- that great Scottish man of prayer, said,

"A great part of my time is spent in getting my heart in tune for prayer, because prayer is the link that connects earth to heaven."

Dr. Guthrie, an old saint of God who lived a century ago, said,

"The first sign of true spiritual life is prayer, and it is also the means of maintaining spiritual life. Man can, as well, live physically without breathing as spiritually without praying."

Now, if it's true, as D. L. Moody says, that the people who have made the greatest impact on the earth would be people of prayer- then we would expect Daniel to be a man of prayer. And if prayer is as normal to a genuine believer as breathing- then we should expect that Daniel's life would be a life that flows naturally and normally in prayer. And that is exactly what we find as we study Daniel's life.

Now there is no doubt that the Jewish people- the people of Judah who were in exile here- had somehow managed to take with them into exile some- if not all- of the Writings of the Old Testament. Obviously, they had the **Book of Jeremiah**- which was written and destroyed and then rewritten again as Jeremiah tells us. But among the Books that they had, which they read from in their exile, were the Prophecies of Jeremiah and, in verse 2- as Daniel was reading from Jeremiah- he came across the prophecy that the desolation of Jerusalem would only last for about seventy years. And that struck Daniel as a very significant reality, because he knew that he had been in captivity for nearly seventy years by this time.

## **The Balance Between God's Sovereignty and Human Responsibility**

Now at the time of Chapter 9- Daniel was a man beyond eighty years of age and he knew that when God made a Promise- that Promise would always come to pass because Daniel knew that God was absolutely Sovereign. And so from reading Jeremiah- Daniel knew that God was going to restore Israel again after 70 years of correction and chastisement. But as we read- we see that it was this knowledge of what God's Word said and what God's Will was that motivated Daniel- not to rest and relax and rejoice- but to fast and pray and repent. Why is that?

Daniel understood the delicate balance between God's Omnipotent Sovereignty and Human Responsibility. So after he clearly understood what God's Word said; and after he understood clearly what God's Will was- he prayed that what God had already promised would happen would happen.

Daniel knew that God's Sovereignty would cause God's Will to always come to pass- but he also knew that the *way* in which God has chosen to cause His Will to come to pass is through the willing and submitted actions and choices of His people- especially in prayer. Daniel understood then as we must understand today that God does what He desires to do by answering the prayers of His people as they pray in accord with His Word and in accord with His Will.

And so in full comprehension of God's Sovereignty- and knowing from God's Word that there must first be a human acceptance- a writing on the human heart by God's Spirit; a brokenness and a repentance in order for God to end the chastening- Daniel begins to pray.

This is exactly what the Apostle John did as recorded for us in the Book of the Revelation who after hearing the Word of God- "**Behold, I come quickly**" he begins to pray- "**Even so, come Lord Jesus.**" John lines his prayer up with what he knows to be God's Will.

## **Why Believers Say, "Amen"**

This is the foundation behind every single "Amen" in the entire Bible because "Amen" means: *so let it be*. And when we say, "Amen" to God's Word as it is preached- we are praying, "Bring it to pass. Let it be." So by saying, "Amen"- we are agreeing that God's Will will and should be done and realizing that now that we

know what God' Will is- we must bring ourselves into alignment with that Will and do and think and pray accordingly so that it will come to pass.

We must always understand that sinful Man must align his wavering heart with God and God's Word and God's Will so that God will be magnified and God's Purposes will be accomplished in the earth. And prayer is the method that God has chosen to so that.

Prayer, then, is necessary- even though God is Sovereign and Absolute and Omnipotent. And we must also know that there were times when God extended things and there have been times when God's shortened things. So in context with His Absolute Sovereignty- we cannot and we must not even try to box God in. He may shorten things or He may lengthen things- that is His Prerogative. And so Daniel sets about to pray- knowing that somehow the rightness and brokenness and humility of God's people fits into the Sovereign Plan of God to chasten them through their captivity.

So Daniel prays and fasts and repents- not only for the people of God- but for himself. And as this man fervently and effectually prays- we see eight different elements of true intercessory prayer emerging and flowing out of this marvelous prayer. Now these eight elements are not explicitly taught here in **Daniel 9**- but they are implicitly found here. They are not the purpose of the prayer- yet they become, for us, a very good purpose, because they help us to see what is included in proper 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

### **Why We Need to be Taught the Elements of True Prayer**

As sinful human beings- we have two basic problems when it comes to prayer:

- A. We don't pray without ceasing
- B. We don't know what to pray for

We simply do not pray enough. And so the Bible, again and again and again, says that we- as God's people are to be people of prayer- that prayer should be as normal and natural to us as breathing. The Church should be a House of Prayer. We should all continue in prayer- we should pray without ceasing.

The second thing is we don't know what to pray for. And that's why **Romans 8:26** says, **Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.**

...to be continued