

Elements of True Prayer

Examining the Prayer of Daniel- Part 6

Tuesday October 20, 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 here Daniel prays and fasts and repents- not only for the people of God- but also 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 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

Now in previous studies- we have already seen that true intercessory prayer is generated by the Word of God; Grounded in God's Will; and Characterized by Fervency. So tonight- let's begin to examine the other five elements.

4. True Prayer is Realized Through a Life of Self Denial- Part 1- The Confession of Sin

Daniel 9:4a

And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession...

We have to know that at the heart of all true prayer is an initial awareness that we don't even belong there to begin with. Sinful human beings don't even belong in the Presence of God. We have no right; no authority; and no reason to even be in God's Presence to begin with because of the abundance of sin that is ever present in our lives. And this correct, Biblical understanding about our infinite unworthiness is supposed to bring about a humble and broken attitude in us about prayer right from the beginning. We do not have one single thing in and of ourselves that would commend us to God.

The only reason that any of us can ever get into God's Presence is because God Himself made a way for us through the horrible torture and brutal and violent and bloody murder of Jesus and because God Himself put the desire to be in His Presence in our hearts. Other than that- nobody would even care to come into God's Presence and if by some miracle- somebody *would* care- he still would have no way.

John 14:1-6

1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Daniel understands this and so where does he begin his prayer? With requests for healing or blessing or gifts or prosperity or even safety? No. He confesses his great sin. Daniel writes that he:

... made my confession...

But why did he do that? He had just read in Jeremiah that God was going to do something wonderful and that within 2- 5 years- God had Promised that He was going to free the people of God from a horrible and evil and brutal captivity in a pagan land that they had been in between 65-68 long years and instead of leaping for joy- Daniel humbles himself; begins to fast; and confesses his sin. Why? Two reasons:

1. Daniel knew that God had said almost 300 years earlier that part of God's requirement for freeing the people from captivity is that they would humble themselves; repent of their sins and turn to Him

2 Chronicles 7:14

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

2. Daniel knew that he didn't belong in God's Presence- especially if he were to drag some sin in there with him.

Now contrast that self denying attitude with the prayer of the Pharisee in **Luke 18**, who says,

Luke 18:11&12

11 God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

...and Jesus said that God didn't even hear that prayer in terms of an answer or a response- precisely because it was self-righteous; self-serving; and self-confident. We must know that while the lost pagan world admires human accomplishment and achievement and the pride that it brings- the Owner and the Creator of the Universe opposes it.

James 4:6b

...God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

1Peter 5:5b

... Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

One of the most important Aspects of God that anyone could ever know is that God actively *opposes* the proud in heart- because in his sinful arrogance- that person actually fights against God and he actively competes with God for Recognition and Glory. However- God mercifully grants Grace to those who humble themselves- because they fearfully and gladly step aside as God takes center stage and receives all Honor.

We must know that being proud is the same thing as robbing God of His Glory while being humble is the same thing as acknowledging God's sole claim on all Glory. And Daniel knew this and so he begins his prayer with a confession and recognition that he doesn't even belong in God's Presence. Now it would be correct to assume that in this confession- Daniel would have searched his whole life and found everything that stood between himself and God. Things like:

- ✓ Active Wickedness
- ✓ Deafness to the Divine Voice,
- ✓ Stubborn Disobedience to clear and plain Commands
- ✓ Contempt of the Sovereign Lordship of God
- ✓ Covetousness and Lust for Worldly Things

All of these things brought Daniel to that wonderful place of broken humility. And, beloved, I tell you, humility is the only vantage point from which true prayer flows. The only one.

This is the way that Abraham prayed:

Genesis 18:20-33

20 And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;

21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

22 And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.

23 And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

24 Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?

25 That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

26 And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

27 And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes:

28 Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.

29 And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake.

30 And he said unto him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.

31 And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake.

32 And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.

33 And the LORD went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.

After King Uzziah dies- the Prophet Isaiah saw God high and lifted up; he saw Seraphim carrying the Lord through Heaven and crying, "Holy, Holy, Holy!" and he saw the posts of the door tremble at the Presence of God and the first thing that this golden tongued Prophet said in response to all that Glory was:

Isaiah 6:5-8

5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

The Apostle Paul recognized the same truth about himself. He had no right to be in God's Presence either. He said that he was the "chief of sinners". The Apostle John saw the same thing, and when he saw the incomprehensible Beauty of the fully revealed Christ- he fell down in trembling humility.

And so Daniel understands all of this. Daniel understands that based upon his own goodness; his own righteousness; his own sinful heart- he doesn't even belong in the Presence of God. And so before he can possibly intercede for anybody else- he's got to make sure that his own heart is in the right place.

An Arrogant Heart Causes Your Prayers to Go Unanswered

If there's impotence in your prayer life- it is mostly due to the fact that there is no self-denial in your life. God is opposing you. And we need to know that self-denial means the ongoing setting aside of your will for God's Will. So if you're in the arena- trying to badger God into what you want for yourself- please know that that's not self-denial. A prayer that I've often prayed alone in my Study on Sunday Mornings before Church goes something like this.

"Oh, God, I am an arrogant and prideful man. I acknowledge that I often do Your Work; in Your Name; without Your Power and therefore bring You no Glory. I go about Your Business, many times, in a self centered way- seeking Glory for myself. I confess to You that this is sin and evil. This is my corrupt heart. This is who I am. I am not worthy to even speak Your Name. I fear what others may think of me more than I value being faithful to You. I am more concerned with my own well being than I am with bringing Honor to Your great Name. Please forgive me. Consider what sin I have committed and cause me to mourn over it. As I stand to preach Your Word today- let me not spare my own heart and flesh- but please let that sharp two edged sword pierce me and cut me and divide between the very thoughts and intents of my heart. Do great damage to my pride today. Expose my hypocrisy and my lukewarmness and my shallowness so that I may see it; and hate it; and give me strength to turn from it. Bring into

my life those things that You see fit to help me to be humble so You will not resist me and take away from my life those things that You see that will in any way hinder that."

I really don't think anybody can ever minister to anybody else in prayer or preaching or in any other way *effectively* until they live a life of self-denial- and Daniel knew that- so he dealt with that matter right up front. He pleaded with God for a deeper repentance; a renewed horror of his own sin- a dreading even of its approach. He wanted God to see him and purify him- precisely because he knew he wasn't pure.

One of the Puritan writers wonderfully put it this way.

"Plow deep in me, great Lord, heavenly Husbandman, that my being may be a tilled field. The roots of grace spreading far and wide until Thou alone art seen in me. Thy beauty golden like summer's harvest. Thy fruitfulness as the plenty of autumn."...

May God grant that we will be a humble and broken people- a people who live a life of self denial and a people who will confess our own sins quickly when we pray.

... to be continued