

Daniel's Prayer, Part 2
Daniel 9
ABC 1/26/20

How's your prayer life been this week? Have you made the time in your busy schedule to spend time with God in prayer? As you read His Word do you find yourself praying it back to Him? I trust the time we've spent the last 2 weeks has encouraged you to pray more this year than last year. I trust that hearing personal testimonies of what prayer means to people is as uplifting & encouraging to you as it is to me. Last week we heard from Gary. This morning we have the privilege of hearing from Tony & Judy. Come, share with us what prayer has meant to you, especially over the last year or so. Tony & Judy

Thank you for sharing your personal experiences with prayer with all of us. It's been our joy to see how God has worked through the prayers of his people.

2 weeks ago we looked at being **devoted to prayer** (Col 4:2; Rom 12:12). Last week we began looking at Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9. To put it as simply as possible, prayer is simply communion, fellowship, & conversation with God. It's identifying ourselves with Him & with His plans, purposes, & promises.

The story's told that one day, the 5-year-old son of Dwight L Moody came into his study. His father was there, very busy with his Bible, studying & he writing & didn't want any interruptions. The little guy just stood beside him & didn't say a word. Not a sound. &, finally, the distraction was more than Moody could bear, & gruffly he said, *Well, what do you want?*

Nothing, Daddy, said his son, *I just wanted to be where you are.*¹

I think that may be what prayer is. It isn't that you necessarily want anything. It's just that you'd like to be where He is. Prayer is entering into God's presence & is necessary for every Christian. By looking at Daniel's prayer we find some principles of prayer that we can use in our own lives. Of course, Daniel didn't pray this for the purpose of teaching us, but he does so as we see what he includes in his prayer.

Last Sunday we saw that prayer is generated by God's Word. Remember, Daniel was reading in Jeremiah & it spurred him to pray. We pray as a response to God's Word working within us. People

¹ Harold Sala, *Touching God: 52 Guidelines for Personal Prayer*, p 45

of the book are people of prayer. Are you in God's Word more this year than last? Are you praying more this year than last? Secondly, we saw that prayer is grounded in God's will. As Daniel was reading in Jeremiah he discovered God had said they'd be in captivity for 70 years. That time was almost past so Daniel prays according to God's will & wants God to do what He said He would do. We should always pray that God would do His will. What does Jn say in his 1st letter? **If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us** (14). How did Jesus teach us to pray? **Your kingdom come. Your will be done** (Mt 6:10). We pray not to change the mind of God because He already wants what is the very best for us. We don't want to change His mind from what's best for us, do we? Of course not. We pray to line up our will with His. Daniel prays that God would do as He said he would do. **4-19 PRAY**

We all have 2 basic problems when it comes to prayer. 1) We can all pray more than we do. That's why the Bible tells us to continue in prayer & to pray without ceasing. 2) We don't always know what to pray for. Thankfully, Paul in Rom 8 tells us that even when we don't know what to pray for, the Spirit intercedes for us (26). Aren't you thankful? We don't know what God's will is in every situation. None of us do. As we study the Word of God, we know His will in some cases. We know it's God's will that people be saved. We know it's His will that His children be filled with His Spirit (Eph 5:17-18). We know it's God's will that we abstain from sexual immorality (1 Thes 4:3). We know that God's will is that we be in submission to those in authority over us (Rom 13:1; Heb 13:17; 1 Pt 2:13). It's God's will that in everything we give thanks (1 Thes 5:18). We know many things that are God's will. But we don't always know in every situation. But when we don't know & don't know how to pray, the Spirit makes intercession for us. This is a divine communion between the Spirit of God & the Father. When I don't know the will of God, I know that the Spirit does & that **He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God** (Rom 8:27). That's the reason that we know that all things work together for what? **For good**. That's not by chance but because the Spirit of God is interceding for us. As we look again at Daniel's prayer we can learn from it. Today we see that...

3. Prayer is characterized by fervency We could fatalistically say, *I accept it's the will of God. God, do what You're going to do. It's a great plan, carry it out,* with no passion or fervency. Is that the way we see Daniel pray? Look at vs **3**.

We know Daniel was persistent in his prayers. If you don't know that, read chpt 6. Prayer was his life-style & that's what got him in the lion's den. If you look ahead to vs 20, he's still praying when the answer comes. He was a persistent pray-er. But I'm not talking so much about frequency now but about fervency. What's that? Intensity of feeling or expression, zealous. Daniel took prayer seriously. He says in vs 3, **I gave my attention**. It literally says, *I set my face, I fixed my gaze, or I pointed my face in the direction of God*. This is an undistracted, concentrated kind of preoccupation. It's steadfastness. Daniel approached God as a man who wouldn't be denied. He did this because he was convinced his prayer was in the will of God & knew it wasn't motivated by selfish motives. Who did he turn his face towards? **To the Lord God**. To his Master, his Lord, & his God. He set his face to his Lord to plead with Him in **prayer & supplication**. The word for **prayer** is the common one simply meaning to intervene. **Supplication** represents the outpouring of a troubled soul. He does this fervently, with fasting, sackcloth, & the use of ashes. All these are ways of expressing passion, brokenness, contrition, sorrow, humility, & meekness. **Fasting** is always linked with prayer in the Scriptures, except with the Pharisee who said, **I fast twice a week** (Lk 18:12), which did him no good. He did it self-righteously. But true fasting is connected with prayer. People fast because they're so burdened with things they're praying for that they've lost interest in food. There's no particular virtue in fasting, the virtue is in the preoccupation, the determination, the setting of the face toward God. Daniel set his face toward God with such urgency that he didn't eat. He was like Hannah weeping & fasting as she pled for a son (1 Sam 1:8). He was like the Ninevites who under the preaching of the prophet Jonah were fasting & pleading for forgiveness (Jonah 3:5-9). In the Bible they wore sackcloth as a sign of humiliation & unworthiness. Ashes were a symbol of humiliation & insignificance & sometimes as a sign or repentance. All of this expresses the fervency of Daniel's prayer. When you're caught up in the purposes of God, there's a fervency

in your prayer life. Prayer can't be just a passing, occasional, optional thing. It's a setting of the heart towards God. Puritan Thomas Brooks said,

As a painted fire is no fire, a dead man no man, so a cold prayer is no prayer. In a painted fire there is no heat, in a dead man there is no life; in a cold prayer there is no omnipotency, no devotion, & no blessing.... Cold prayers are as arrows without heads, as swords without edges, as birds without wings. They pierce not, they cut not. They fly not up to heaven. Cold prayers do always freeze before they reach to heaven. O that Christians would chide themselves out of their cold prayers, & chide themselves into a better, & warmer frame of spirit, when they make their supplications to the Lord.²

Jeremy Taylor adds,

Easiness of desire is a great enemy to the success of a good man's prayer.... It must be an intent, zealous, busy, operative prayer; for consider what a huge indecency it is, that a man should speak to God for a thing that he values not.... Our prayers upbraid our spirits, when we beg coldly & tamely for those things for which we ought to die, which are more precious than the gloves of kings, & weightier than imperial scepters, richer than the spoils of the sea, or the treasures of the ... hills. He that is cold & tame in his prayers, hath not tasted of the deliciousness of religion & the goodness of God.³

Prayer is based on God's Word & in accordance with His will. It's to be done fervently & now we see in prayer we...

4. Identify with God's people. Intercessory prayer isn't preoccupied with self. It's unusual to find a prayer in Scripture that's strictly personal, although there are some. Most biblical prayers are identified with God's people, praying for others. In Eph 6:18-19 we see that Paul was always praying for all the saints, & then he adds, **& pray on my behalf**. The focus of our prayers is to be on others. It's hard for a mature believer to demand from God things that relate to him apart from any consideration of those around him. Notice the pronouns Daniel uses in his prayer. Vs 5, **We have sinned**. Vs 6, **We have not listened to Your servants the prophets**. Vs 7, **To us** belongs open shame. Vs 8, again, **open shame belongs to us**, O Lord, **to our kings, our princes & our fathers, because we have sinned against You**. Vs 9, **We have rebelled**. Vs 10, **nor have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God**. Vs 11, **All Israel has transgressed**. Then we read at the end of vs 11, **We have sinned against Him**. Vs 13, **We have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our iniquity & giving attention to Your truth**. Time & time again it's **we, us, our**. Vs 14, **We have not**

² *Heaven on Earth* (1657), pp 446-448

³ *The Sermons of the Right Rev. Jeremy Taylor* (1845), pp 38-40

obeyed His voice. Vs 15, **We** have sinned. **We** have been wicked. This is like Eph 6:18 which says, praying always ... for all the saints. Even Jesus taught us to pray, Give us our daily bread. Forgive us our debts (Mt 6:11-12). It's not, *give me mine, forgive me*. The focus of our prayer is to carry the needs of others to God. As Gal 6:2 says we're to **bear one another's burdens & thereby fulfill the law of Christ**. How can we **bear one another's burdens**? By praying for them. Paul is very clear in 1 Cor 12 that we're all one body. When one member hurts, the whole body suffers. & when one rejoices, the whole body rejoices. In Phil 1, Paul says he's always praying for them (4). In Col 1 we see the same thing (4). In Philemon he's always praying for them (4-5). He writes in 2 Cor 1:11, **you also joining in helping us through your prayers**, it was mutual. He prays for them & they pray for him. That's the way the church is to function.

Daniel was coming before the Lord for his people. They were his people & he knew that he was a sinner too. He knew he'd failed & he wasn't ashamed to identify himself with their need. We must do the same. If our prayers are only for ourselves not only are we selfish but we're also sinning because we must pray for each other. We must pray for those around us in the circle of family & friends & then around us in the larger circle of acquaintances & then around us in the next circle & on & on it goes. We need to be consumed & burdened not just for our own needs & concerns, but we need to pray for the people of God we worship with & are brothers & sisters with, which includes Christians around the world. Daniel regards the sins of his people, his priests, his rulers, his judges, & his kings as if they were his own. He can't separate himself from his people, because he knows he's part of the problem. I can't pray a prayer, *Straighten Your church out*, without saying, *& straighten me out 1st*. I can't say, *Lord, bring the truth to Your people. Lord, may Your people love the truth*, without also praying, *& wherever there's error in my life, correct it*. I can't say, *Make Your people godly*, & not say, *& make me godly, too*. Self-righteous people avoid that kind of identification. Self-righteous people isolate themselves. & that's exactly what we see in Lk 18 where the Pharisee says, **I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector** (11). He separates himself. That's a giveaway that he's not godly. The truly godly person says, *I recognize I'm a sinner just like him. My sins may be different but I'm*

as much in need of mercy as this tax collector. Or even better, use no comparison & just pray, **God, be merciful to me, the sinner!** (13). Daniel was a prophet who spoke the truth & was used mightily of God. But he identified God's wayward people. We must do the same. We have to put ourselves in the middle & say, *I'm as guilty as everyone else.* The secret of intercession is *we & us & our.* Prayer is generated by the Word of God, grounded in the will of God, characterized by fervency, & identifies with God's people.

Concluding thoughts. Finish Dan 9 next week.