

9. The prayer of Daniel

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The greatest chapter in the Book of Daniel and one of the greatest chapters of the entire Bible. The double theme is prayer and prophecy. If one were to choose the ten greatest chapters of the Bible on the subject of prayer, this chapter would be included on any list. If the ten most important chapters on prophecy were chosen, this chapter would again be included on any list.

The first 19 verses give us the prayer of Daniel, and the final 8 verses give us the very important prophecy of the Seventy Weeks.

A. THE SETTING FOR DANIEL'S PRAYER

Daniel 9:1-3 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans-- 2 in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. 3 Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

From what we just have read, we can trace the dates of this prayer back to 538 B.C. by knowing the time of king Darius' administration.

During the first year of this new government, Daniel was reading what the Lord had revealed to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem according to Jeremiah 25:11-13 and 29:10.

Jeremiah 25:11-13 And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 'Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,' says the Lord; 'and I will make it a perpetual desolation. So I will bring on that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah has prophesied concerning all the nations.

Jeremiah 29:10 For thus says the Lord: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place.

He found that around 605 B.C., God had declared through Jeremiah that King Nebuchadnezzar would bring the Jews under Babylonian rule for seventy years as punishment for their disobedience to the Lord for 490 years. Since they were supposed to give a year Sabbath to their land for every seventh years, God kept them away from their land for 70 years to rest the land.

While rereading Jeremiah's prophecy, Daniel was reminded that his people's period of captivity was coming to an end. This discovery sent Daniel to his knees in prayer for the Jews.

Let me ask you this: Why do you think that God allow Daniel to include his prayer to the Lord right in the middle of all these great prophecies? I believe that when we

read prophecies, they should inspire us to pray and worship our God. It should also cause us to report for duty, making ourselves available for His service.

We all have learned that what God promises, He get it done no matter what. Then why would Daniel pray as passionately as he did in this chapter? Because he knew that God's promises invite our prayers and participation. That means that nothing can be better for us than to ask for what God has promised.

1 John 5:14-15 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

Even in God's eternal decrees, human agencies are essential. God's plan of the ages is declared, yet Jeremiah made a prophecy, Daniel made a prayer, and king Cyrus made a proclamation.

Just like Daniel got excited about deliverance by God from bondage of the foreign enemies, we, too, should be excited in living in the time of the greatest deliverance by our Lord Jesus Christ – the Rapture. It can be tonight before we even finish this study, or it can be tomorrow morning. Who knows! But we are living in the age that Jesus can come to get us out of here anytime.

B. THE CONTENT OF DANIEL'S PRAYER

Daniel 9:4-19 And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, 5 we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments. 6 Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land. 7 O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day--to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against You. 8 O Lord, to us belongs shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. 9 To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him. 10 We have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets. 11 Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him. 12 And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing upon us a great disaster; for under the whole heaven such has never been done as what has been done to Jerusalem. 13 As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth. 14 Therefore the Lord has kept the disaster in mind, and brought it upon us; for the Lord our God is righteous in all the works which He does, though we have not obeyed His voice. 15 And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made Yourself a name, as it is this day--we have sinned, we have done wickedly! 16 "O Lord,

according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all those around us. 17 Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. 18 O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. 19 O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name."

The content of Daniel's prayer has the same format as the one Jesus taught us how to pray in the Lord's prayer:

1) Worship and adoration

Daniel begins and interweaves his prayer with acknowledgments of God's perfect character. He says that the Lord is "great and awesome". He also expresses his respect for God's faithful and righteous dealings with His people. Addition to that, Daniel recognizes that the Lord is a holy Judge, who cannot let rebellion go undisciplined. He also acknowledges that the Lord is compassionate and forgiving, and that He will not permit His people to be afflicted forever.

Daniel began his prayer where we all should - by recognizing the greatness and goodness of God. Sometimes we approach God as a stingy person who must be persuaded with praises to give us something. But Daniel knew the problem was not with God. We are the problems. We are the one who break our promises to God. However, He keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him.

2) Confession

With this understanding of God, it is little wonder that Daniel opens his heart and confesses his sin before the Lord.

This prayer of Daniel is very personal. It concerns him and his people, which is evident by the repeated use of the first person pronouns, 'I, we, and our'. They appear forty-one times in this prayer. You may remember that I pointed out how Nebuchadnezzar used the personal pronoun "I, my, me and myself" in chapter 4. What is the difference? For Nebuchadnezzar it was a mark of pride and a mark of self-exaltation. Daniel's prayer shows humility and confession.

3) Thanksgiving

Daniel acknowledges that God keeps the covenant and mercy to them that love Him. He not only makes promises, but He keeps them. He is immutable and faithful. He is also a God of mercy. It was by His mercy that the nation Israel had been preserved. It is by His mercy that you and I have been brought to this present moment. It is by His mercy that He saves us. God is gracious, but God also expects us to mean business, and God expects us to obey Him.

*Lamentation 3:22-23 Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed,
Because His compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning; Great is
Your faithfulness*

4) Supplication

After acknowledging his own wrongs and those of his fellow countrymen, Daniel urges the Lord to fulfill His promise to end the seventy years of Babylonian captivity. His petition is filled with fervency.

The Hebrew term for 'supplications' means "entreaties, pleadings." It conveys the idea of a servant earnestly requesting his king to meet particular needs. Daniel implored his Heavenly Master to hear his requests and fill them according to the promises in Scripture.

Daniel acknowledged that there was nothing he or his fellow Jews could do to earn God's forgiveness. Rather, the answer to his prayer depended solely on the Lord's superabundant compassion.

We should also observe that Daniel's primary passion was not for himself or the other Jews, but for God's glory. Daniel called on the Lord to restore Israel and Jerusalem for His sake, not anyone else's. This Hebrew prophet was concerned that the Lord's reputation would be marred if He did not free His people from captivity and return them to their native soil as He had promised.

C. SEVEN THINGS WE SHOULD REMEMBER ABOUT PRAYER

1) There is absolutely no power in prayer itself.

Without God, our prayer is nothing more than a desperate plea by a desperate person. But the One who listens to our prayer has power to answer our pleas and to fulfill His promises.

2) When we pray to the Lord, instead of trying to twist God's arm, we should put ourselves in His hands.

We cannot manipulate our God with our schemes, because He is all knowing and all powerful. It is far better for us to fall upon the merciful hands of God.

3) Extraordinary prayer and fasting are not tools to get whatever we want from God.

They are demonstrations of radical submission and surrender to God's power and will.

4) The devil doesn't want you to know this, but the truth is that you can approach the throne of God any time – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The devil wants us to believe that approaching God in prayer is based upon a point system. He wants us to think, If I have been a good Christian, I can approach God. But if I have sinned, God will never hear my voice.

Christians can approach God any time, because our relationship with the Almighty is not based on what we have done for Him. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross applies to us when we are down as well as when we are up. In the process of life, we will confess our sins and ask God to forgive us. But all the while, we possess access to go boldly to the throne of God.

Hebrews 4:15–16 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

5) Prayer is a conversation with God, not a formula. It's not the words we pray that matter, it's the condition of our heart.

We don't have to make flowery words for God to hear our prayer. He'd prefer to hear a few heart-felt sentences than thousand empty-hearted spiritual mumbo jumbo.

We need to understand the important truth that prayer is not bending God our way, but rather it is bending us His way. And then, we just may see our prayers being answered in the affirmative.

6) Prayer will make a man cease from sin, but sin will entice a man to cease from prayer.

During the time of one year period of David's adultery with Bathsheba, we don't find one single record of psalm he wrote or prayer to God. I've never met any backslidden Christian who earnestly pray and seek God during the time of backslidden stage. They would do anything to stay away from God rather than praying to the Lord while they are backslidden.

7) Prayer honors God, acknowledges His being, exalts His power, adores His providence and secures His aid.

God is good, but we are not. God doesn't need us, but we need Him. Prayer to Him is the line that connect from us to Him. The Word of God is the line that connect from Him to us.