

THE PRAYER OF DANIEL

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Date: 13-02-2022

Scripture: Daniel 9

As we look at Daniel's prayer, let us also remember the kind of person that Daniel was because I feel that is an important aspect of this prayer.

Daniel 9:1-19 (NLT)

¹ It was the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede, the son of Ahasuerus, who became the king of the Babylonians. ² During the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, learned from reading the Word of the Lord, as revealed to Jeremiah the prophet, that Jerusalem must lie desolate for seventy years. ³ So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and fasting. I also wore rough burlap and sprinkled myself with ashes.

(You see the way he prepared himself for prayer, in sackcloth and ashes. He prepares himself to pray even as he recognizes that these 70 years that he is reading from the scroll of Jeremiah is about to come to an end, and this captivity that he is a part of in Babylon is about to end, according to God's word.)

⁴ I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed:

O Lord, you are a great and awesome God! You always fulfill your covenant and keep your promises of unfailing love to those who love you and obey your commands. ⁵ But we have sinned and done wrong. We have rebelled against you and scorned your commands and regulations. ⁶ We have refused to listen to your servants the prophets, who spoke on your authority to our kings and princes and ancestors and to all the people of the land.

⁷ "Lord, you are in the right; but as you see, our faces are covered with shame. This is true of all of us, including the people of Judah and Jerusalem and all Israel, scattered near and far, wherever you have driven us because of our disloyalty to you. ⁸ O Lord, we and our kings, princes, and ancestors are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. ⁹ But the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him. ¹⁰ We have not obeyed the Lord our God, for we have not followed the instructions he gave us through his servants the prophets. ¹¹ All Israel has disobeyed your instruction and turned away, refusing to listen to your voice.

"So now the solemn curses and judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, (he is talking of those curses found in Deuteronomy 28) have been poured down on us because of our sin. ¹² You have kept your word and done to us and our rulers exactly as you warned. Never has there been such a disaster as happened in Jerusalem. ¹³ Every curse written against us in the Law of Moses has come true. yet we have refused to seek mercy from the Lord our God by turning from our sins and recognizing his truth. ¹⁴ Therefore, the Lord has brought upon us the disaster he prepared. The Lord our God was right to do all of these things, for we did not obey him.

¹⁵ *“O Lord our God, you brought lasting honor to your name by rescuing your people from Egypt in a great display of power. But we have sinned and are full of wickedness. ¹⁶ In view of all your faithful mercies, Lord, please turn your furious anger away from your city Jerusalem, your holy mountain. All the neighboring nations mock Jerusalem and your people because of our sins and the sins of our ancestors.*

¹⁷ *“O our God, hear your servant’s prayer! Listen as I plead. For your own sake, Lord, smile again on your desolate sanctuary.*

¹⁸ *“O my God, lean down and listen to me. Open your eyes and see our despair. See how your city—the city that bears your name—lies in ruins. We make this plea, not because we deserve help, but because of your mercy.*

¹⁹ *“O Lord, hear. O Lord, forgive. O Lord, listen and act! For your own sake, do not delay, O my God, for your people and your city bear your name.”*

Such a poignant, real prayer! While reading it, it just touched me, especially the last 3 or 4 verses – such a plea to God to reach down and to see His covenant people through His eyes of mercy.

In these 19 verses, there are two standouts for me. It’s almost an antiphonal kind of prayer – on one hand, he affirms God’s goodness and greatness, and on the other hand he confesses the people’s shortcomings. Throughout the prayer, we see him talk about God and then we see him talk about the sin of the nation. Talks about some attribute of God and then some particular sin that the people had indulged in. Going through it, I came up with two lists:

God’s attributes

You are great
You are faithful
You are merciful

People’s sins

We have sinned
We have scorned
We have rebelled

Notice that Daniel says ‘we’ – he puts himself along with the people. Remember that Daniel must have been in his teens when he was taken into exile. He was one of the youths that Nebuchadnezzar said, “Find the brightest, the wisest among these people whom we are taking into captivity, and then train them, educate them so that they can lead the people here.” And Daniel was one of them along with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. These were the four that were mentioned. The bible tells us, in Ezekiel, that Daniel was a righteous man, and as we read through the book of Daniel, we can see that. yet, he has no trouble identifying with the people and saying, “We have sinned. We have done this.....

- We have sinned and done wrong (mentioned thrice)
- We have rebelled (2)
- Scorned
- We’ve been disloyal to You
- We’ve been disobedient (2)
- We haven’t followed the instruction of the Prophets
- We’ve turned away
- We’ve refused to listen to Your voice
- Haven’t sought mercy (in other words – we were stubborn)
- Haven’t turned from sin (in other words – no repentance)
- Haven’t recognized the truth (in other words – we live in lies)
- We are wicked people.

It's good for us to remember that Daniel lists the attitudes of a sinful heart as he went to the Lord in prayer. That must be the way we too need to pray, that we are sorry Lord, for doing wicked things. We are sorry for engaging in lies and living in lies. We are sorry for this sin. We are sorry for the truth that we have spurned. We're sorry for having scorned Your Word or being disloyal to it.

Then he talks about the beauty of God's attitude and God's character in the light of all that:-

- You are awesome God.
- You fulfil Your covenant.
- You are a promise keeper.
- You are in the right.
- You are merciful.
- You are forgiving.
- You have kept Your Word.
- You rescued us from Egypt.
- You are powerful.

What a beautiful way to pray – to constantly remind ourselves, in the midst of detailing the things that we have done wrong, to also detail and remind ourselves of who God is. We see the holiness of God against our faithlessness, the truth of God against our lies, our turning away from Him against His turning toward us, our wickedness against His mercy, and His love and His forgiving nature and His grace. What a prayer! Maybe that's the way we need to pray, to always remind ourselves that when we go to God, that's the kind of God that we're going to. A God who is loving, filled with grace and mercy, who never wants to let us go. In the midst of the sins that we have committed, Daniel keeps reminding himself of who God is. It's an encouraging and humbling thought, to be able to go like that, to keep reminding us. It encourages us on the one hand, and humbles us, in fact, humiliates us when we think of our sin against God's glorious awesome power and holiness.

Today, I want us to move away from the how to pray which we've looked at in all earlier five prayers, and move to the kind of person we need to be as we pray.

I think Daniel is such a role model as a prayer warrior for us. In fact, MacArthur calls this the perfect prayer because of who prayed it. A person like Daniel with the integrity of Daniel. When we look at chapter 6:4-5, during the time of Darius when Daniel had risen to such great power and authority that the other people were getting jealous. Then the other administrators and high officers began searching for some fault in the way Daniel was handling governmental affairs; but they couldn't find anything to criticize or condemn. He was faithful, always responsible and completely trustworthy. They concluded that their only chance of finding grounds for accusing Daniel would be in connection with the rules of his religion.

CHARACTER SKETCH OF DANIEL

Let us see what it is that made Daniel who he was, that made God almost lean down to hear him and answer his prayer and to bless him in such incredible ways, and be his strong deliverer even as he lived his life in a strange land among strange customs and cultures, and yet tried to live a godly life.

1. He was uncompromising in his faith.

He didn't back down when he was asked to eat food that he wasn't supposed to eat. When they came to Babylon, because he was picked as one of the people to nurture, he was invited to eat the food from the king's table. And Daniel refused. He said, "I can't defile myself by eating that kind of food." Imagine! You're in exile. You are a captive and asked to eat good food. And yet he dares to say, "That will defile me. I cannot eat that food." Then when the person in charge says, "Listen! I cannot let you do that. what will the king say when he sees you after a time, looking all lean

undernourished?" And Daniel says, "Trust me. Give us vegetables and water. And at the end of this time, you present us to the king and you decide whether it's been good or not." He didn't back down. steadfast, uncompromising, wasn't brash or prideful or rude about his beliefs, but he stood by his convictions with courage and boldness. At the end of it, they found that he was more robust than any of the others, having stuck to his principles.

2. He trusted God implicitly.

I want to stress this. When we call out to God, we ought to be able to trust Him implicitly. God, whatever the outcome, we trust You to take us through, to help us with this issue, to listen to our prayer. We trust You implicitly.

Remember Daniel in the lion's den. He was thrown there because he wouldn't stop praying during those thirty days that the officials had said you cannot pray to anyone but the king. But three times a day, Daniel continued to pray to God. So he was thrown in with the lions. And the king is so sad to do it. And yet, Daniel is bold. He will not relent on what he knows to be true, and he trusts God to get him through it. He didn't rely on his own strength or wisdom; he was smart, and when faced with a dilemma, he prayed to God and asked God to show him His favor and compassion.

He trusted God implicitly. Trusted God through the time that he ate vegetables and water, trusted God in the time when he was called to interpret the dream which Nebuchadnezzar wouldn't share, but he had to tell the dream and its interpretation. He goes to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and says, "Pray, we need to ask God to help us." Implicit trust God who had placed him in this situation would come through for him.

3. He was humble.

Humility personified. He walked humbly. When we see his prayer to God and His name, and the things that God had done through him and the place to which he had been elevated, he could have walked with such pride. His prayer could have been: Lord, this is what needs to happen. The 70 weeks are over. Lord, do Your thing." He didn't! His prayer is just cloaked in humility – a prayer acceptable to God. As Jesus pointed out in the parable of the publican and the pharisee; one proud, "I'm not like this person," and the other, "Lord, forgive me." Daniel prayed like that even though he had the stature of the three most powerful men in the kingdom at that time. Humility.

4. He was wise and used discretion.

He was wise in his dealings with people and used discretion. He was not one to act hastily. He was patient and prayerful. He waited for the right opportunity to act, and then he did so with modesty. Look at the way in which he handled the people when he told the person in charge of looking after him. How beautifully he spoke! He says, "Please test us for ten days on a diet of vegetables and water. At the end of ten days, see how we look compared to the other young men who are eating the king's food. Then make your decision in light of what you see." Gracious words!

When Arioch, chief of the royal guards came to execute him and all the other wise men, Daniel handled the situation with such wisdom and discretion. He asked Arioch why the king had issued such a harsh decree. Then Arioch told him what had happened. So gentle! He spoke with wisdom. He knew how to speak wisely in situations, whether he was talking to the king's commanders or he was talking to the king, he never spoke arrogantly.

5. He had courage.

Daniel was very bold. He never backed off from the interpretation of the dreams even though it was not something that the king would want to hear. In chapter 4, he says, "King Nebuchadnezzar, please accept my advice. Stop sinning and do what is right. Break from your wicked past and be

merciful to the poor. Perhaps then, you will continue to prosper.” Harsh words! Hard words to say. And yet, what God had given him, he spoke boldly.

To Belshazzar he said, in Daniel 5:22, “O Belshazzar, you knew all this, yet you have not humbled yourself.” Then when he got this message ‘MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN’, those four words which were written on the wall which means, ‘God has numbered the days of your reign. God has weighed you and you have not measured up, and then your kingdom will be divided between the Medes and the Persians.’ He was bold. He spoke those just as God gave him the interpretation.

Philip Bliss wrote this song:

Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known!

Standing by a purpose true,
Heeding God’s command.
Honor them, the faithful few,
All hail to Daniel’s band.

Many giants, great and tall
Stalking through the land.
Headlong to the earth would fall
If met by Daniel’s band.

Daniel’s band, men who prayed, men who walked like him, courageously, boldly, in humility. Dare to be a Daniel. I believe that is our challenge this morning, to emulate this prayer warrior, to be able to trust God implicitly, however difficult the situation or challenge may be. and then, like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to say, “O king, even if the Lord doesn’t deliver us from this furnace, we will not bow down to you.” Uncompromisingly, and to trust God implicitly that He will get you through your situation in His wisdom. And to be able to have this kind of uncompromising faith, however difficult it might be to maintain. Then to have this Christian witness. Let this kind of prayer life be a witness. This is our calling. That is God’s expectation of us, His children, to be courageous, to do the right thing, to be wise and discerning, trust God to give you the right words, the right attitude and the right timing. Then may be have the attitude, the persona in the heart of an intercessor as we boldly approach the throne of grace. Amen.

Heavenly Father, even as we have looked at your servant, Daniel, and how it must have pleased your heart to see him and see the way he lived his life. Lord, our prayer is that even before we come to you with the kind of prayer that he prayed, that we would also live in the way that You have called us to live, in which Daniel showcased to well, that You would call us Lord, and help us be uncompromising in our faith whatever the situation or the circumstance might be, to continue to have a Christian witness Lord, to witness your goodness and reflect Your love, to be able to stand firm, to trust You implicitly, to walk humbly before You and to come boldly before Your throne, interceding. Lord, not standing afar from the things that may have been done by others and looking down or against them, but to be one with them as Daniel did, to stand together shoulder to shoulder and say, “We have sinned, Lord. Please, for Your name’s sake, do something out of Your mercy. Lord, touch hearts and lives with an anointing of being an intercessor, to intercede for brothers and sisters, for communities, for cities, for our nation, for nations in the world. Give us that kind of a heart O God, and then help us to live a life that is worthy of Your calling. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

