



Daniel 9:1-19

The Effective, Fervent Prayer of a Righteous Man

NKJ Daniel 9:1 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.

4 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."

John Owen said that what a Christian is in their private prayer before god, that they are and nothing more, and so here we are getting a glimpse of the real Daniel. This prayer though is not recorded so that we can merely get to know how great a Christian Daniel really was, it is so that we will be encouraged to follow his example in this most important of all Christian duties.

James who wrote much about prayer in his Letter, said in James 5:6 "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." Well Brothers and Sisters what we have in Daniel was a righteous man who was effective and fervent in his prayer, and as we will see, James' point was proven in that this prayer did avail much. In fact next week we will learn that as soon as Daniel began his supplications, His prayer was immediately answered from Heaven. So let us look first at:

1) why Daniel prayed this prayer, and then 2) *what we can learn from it.*

First, why did Daniel set himself to this prayer in particular: Daniel as we know from previous chapters was a man of constant prayer, He prayed at least three times a day, every day. And he didn't even interrupt that cycle when praying became a death penalty offense. But this is not one of his ordinary prayers, this was a special season of prayer, in which he fasted and put on sackcloth and ashes.

What had gotten it started was his regular bible study, and in particular his study of the reading of Jeremiah the prophet. Now at this time of course Daniel didn't have the bible as a single book like we do, he would have had a collection of scrolls, but he knows that those scrolls are just as much the word of God as what He was being told in His visions. Daniel regards the prophets as the ambassadors of God – you remember He calls them "your servants the prophets who spoke in Your name." So Daniel knows that every promise in Jeremiah is God's promise.

And Daniel had discovered that God had said in Jeremiah 25 that because of their continuing idolatry, God was going to crush Jerusalem and send his people into exile in Babylon, but that after 70 years he will punish Babylon – Jeremiah 25:12 ***"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."***

That had come to pass already. Daniel is writing in 538 BC, the Persians have just crushed the Babylonians, and the children of Judah have been in exile now for 68 years. And what has Daniel excited is not just the fact that God has crushed Babylon just as he promised, it is his other promise in 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.***

11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

12 Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.

13 And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

14 I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.

Daniel is excited because he knows that God has promised that in just two more years he will return his people from exile. So he sets himself to special prayer to that end. Now it is at this point that some people get confused. Why doesn't Daniel just take it easy at this point? Doesn't he believe that God will do what he promised? Yes Daniel believes that God will do everything he promises. Daniel has already confessed that God is absolutely sovereign over all of his creation. He knows that God's sovereignty means that everything He ordains will surely come to pass, but Daniel also knows that God uses *means* in bringing his purposes about. He knows that God used the sinful actions of Joseph's brothers in selling him into Egypt to bring about his promises to protect them and make them a mighty nation.

We know that Christ gave us the guarantee that the Gospel would be "preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come." Christ is even now bringing that promise to pass but the instrumentality he uses is not people suddenly understanding the gospel, nor speaking himself from heaven as He spoke to Paul on the Damascus road, nor sending Gabriel and his Angels to preach to the nations. Christ is doing it by the instrumentality of raising up and sending out preachers.

Romans 10:14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

It is not Calvinism, to expect the elect to be converted without means, it is Hypercalvinism. Perhaps the most famous example of this kind of hyper-Calvinism was when John Ryland responded to William Carey's call for the Reformed Baptists to send missionaries to India by saying, "***Sit down, young man. When God decides to save the heathen, He will do it without your help.***" Well by the grace of God, Carey was a better Calvinist than Ryland, and he knew that God's call was for us to bring the Gospel message that Saves Sinners into all the world. Carey's motto combined God's sovereign power with our responsibility: "***Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.***"

Calvin himself noted that the Promises of God are designed not to make us lazy, but to stimulate the faithful to prayer. Once we know that something is God's will, that he has promised it, then we should be praying for it, and that is exactly what Daniel was doing.

I think to a certain extent, while we haven't become Hypercalvinists, we too have forgotten about the power and importance of prayer. Every great advance of the Gospel in the Bible was preceded by prayer. One of the reasons we have so little revival is that we are prayerless church. Worst attended meetings in the PCA are inevitably the prayer meetings. If we ask why we don't have success, the answer is clearly "***you do not have because you do not ask.***" (James 4:2)

So if we see that prayer is so powerful and important what can we learn from this prayer of Daniel. We have already learned to let the promises of God be our stimulus and guide in our prayer, but let me suggest 3 others.:

First we can learn to recover a sense of awe and reverence in our prayer - Sinclair Ferguson put it very well when he said “true prayer always seeks the glory of God” and there is none of the overly casual approach or informality. I hope you see that Daniel’s prayer is intimate, but not falsely intimate, there is no “*Oh heavenly father, we just really wanna...*” It’s full of genuine emotion, of love and respect and honor, but also deep reverence and awe, it is the language of the prodigal son approaching his father. It is the language of the Lord’s Prayer that Our Savior Taught us, “Our Father Who is in Heaven – Holy is Your Name” Many are concerned that we avoid all formality or reverence in our prayers, and casually enter into the presence of God. I sometimes wonder, have they read the way the one who knows His Father best of All addressed Him. It strikes me that the most intimate and powerful prayers in the entire bible were offered up by Christ in the Garden, and yet they are anything but casual. Christians, by all means go into the throneroom of grace with assurance, go as sons and heirs of the Kingdom. But go as a prince would approach his father the King, in the midst of his court.

Is God the almighty in your prayers or is he as another Scotsman put it, merely “Old Matey?”

Secondly we can learn the importance of confession in our Prayers: Now this is interesting in that while Daniel is one of the only characters in the bible about whom we read nothing negative, no sins, no failings, yet Daniel knew himself to be a sinner, and a sinner who was part of a sinful people. Now perhaps you are thinking. Wait a minute, why should I confess the sins of the church? Because brothers and sisters we are part of an ekklesia, God’s people, and there is no dividing the covenant community. That’s our family, and we belong to a family with a lot of sins a lot of problems, George Barna wrote this in 2002 - *Large majorities claimed that their "religious faith is very important" in their life and described themselves as "deeply spiritual."*

Yet, those same studies revealed that less than half of the people who describe themselves as Christian also described themselves as "absolutely committed to the Christian faith." Less than one out of every ten regular attenders of Christian churches give 10% or more of their income - a "tithe" - to their church. A majority of teenagers attend a Christian church today, but only one-third is likely to do so once they reach adulthood. The persecution delivered by the terrorist attacks has produced no increase in spiritual practices, such as attending worship services, reading the Bible, praying, or serving the needy. Giving levels have actually decreased this year. In fact, not even half of Americans indicated that their faith had been an important factor in helping them process the effects of the terrorist attacks.(2002)

That is our family, our brothers and sisters, and we need badly to confess our familial sins and pray for our reformation and revival and restoration. Friends, we do no good simply standing off and throwing rocks at the other members of family. “Your worship is pathetic, your theology is non-existent.” Daniel, who was in better position than any of us to claim the moral high ground did not do it, because he understood that in a very real sense he would be throwing rocks at his own body. We need instead to know ourselves part of that wider community and confess all of our sins in humility instead of merely complaining about someone else. Daniel did not say, they didn’t listen to you, he said, we didn’t listen to you.

Thirdly, let us plead with God, via his mercy!

Lynchpin Application - 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 are not presenting our

supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion.

What can we go to God with, what can we plead? What merits do we have? Here was Israel's most righteous representative saying he had nothing to bring no merits. That has been the universal declaration of all the humblest and holiest of saints, that without the mercy of God given to through Jesus, without His cleansing blood and righteousness we have no hope.

I'm always reminded here of the story of Corrie Ten Boom's Aunt. Tante Jans put her hands over her eyes and began to cry. 'Empty, empty!' she choked at last through her tears. 'How can we bring anything to God? What does He care for our little tricks and trinkets?' And then as we listened in disbelief she lowered her hands and with tears still coursing down her faced whispered, 'Dear Jesus, I thank You that we must come with empty hands. I thank You that You have done all -- all -- on the Cross, and that all we need in life or death is to be sure of this.'

If you don't already have that righteousness, that only faith in Christ brings, then confess your need and seek it in prayer I beg you! God has freely promised to give that Righteousness to all who earnestly ask for it.