

Daniel Chapter 9:1-19

Daniel's Intercessory Prayer

The most important thing we can do in the service of our King is to become men and women of prayer. Here in chapter 9, we see a prayer of Daniel that the Holy Spirit preserved for us to study. Along with those recorded in Ezra 9 and Nehemiah 9, this is one of the three great prayer chapters of the Old Testament.

Daniel's Prayer for the People

9 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. (difference in**

attitude between law keeping and grace 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.”

Daniel [9:1–19]

Although Daniel was a seer, he was still a student. Although he was a prophet, he was still a pupil. That is, he was one who read the Word regularly and studied it carefully. Now, if Daniel was one given to reading and researching the Scriptures, how much more do I need to do the same.

Here, Daniel comes to the twenty-fifth chapter of Jeremiah and sees that Jeremiah foretold that Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians would carry the Jews into captivity. God allowed this because not only had they embraced idolatry but they had ignored God’s Word continually—specifically as it related to the Sabbath year.

You see, according to Leviticus 25, every seventh year, God’s people were to do no plowing or tilling of the ground. The land was to rest. We now know agriculturally and scientifically why this would be important. But they were simply to take it on faith. On the sixth year, the Lord would give them twice as much in order to see them through the seventh year. But for four hundred and ninety years, they ignored that commandment. In other words, the land missed out on seventy years of rest. Therefore, the Lord told Jeremiah that His people would be carried away captive for seventy years. And while they were gone, the land would rest.

Now the seventy years was almost up. So what did Daniel do? Jeremiah’s writings didn’t simply stimulate his curiosity but they moved him to activity—and that’s always the purpose of prophecy. After reading Jeremiah’s prophecy, Daniel was prompted to pray.

Many times, people don’t pray because they’re not studying or meditating on the Word. When they try to pray, they don’t know what to talk about. I have news for you: God is a great conversationalist and He initiates the conversation through His Word. That’s why reading the Bible is important and studying it is essential. As I read the Scriptures, I discover the things I should talk about in prayer.

1. Introduction: Daniel’s reason for prayer (1–2)

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.

V1 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...

It’s important to understand that Cyrus is the over all king of the Mede and Persian empire who conquered the Babylonians. Darius is a sub king over the realm or province of Babylon. This is important as God revealed Cyrus by name over two hundred years before through the prophet Isaiah. We will read the prophecies later.

V2 Understood by the books: Daniel 9 is one of the most amazing and significant prophetic passages in the Bible, and it begins with Daniel’s understanding and application of prophecy. There are a few observations we can make here:

i. Daniel **understood** something from reading the words of God's prophets. Prophecy is meant to be **understood**—perhaps not in every detail, but certainly in its main points.

ii. Daniel understood this **by the books**—the *specific words* recorded in *God-inspired books*. Daniel couldn't read 2 Timothy 3:16, but he did believe the truth of it:

2 Timothy 3:16 - *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

iii. "These verses show Daniel as a diligent student of Scripture who built his prayer life on the Word of God." (Archer)

iv. Quote from Spurgeon: "Oh! That you studied your Bibles more! Oh! That we all did! How we could plead the promises! How often we should prevail with God when we could hold him to his word, and say, 'Fulfill this word to Your servant, upon You you have caused me to hope.' Oh! It is grand praying when our mouth is full of God's word, **for there is no word that can prevail with him like his own.**"

Another example is George Muller. He was a man of great faith whom God used in mighty ways. His life is an inspiration to us all. What was one of his secrets? Over his life, he read the bible cover to cover 100 times. Why is this important? Because it is by the word of God that our faith grows.

Romans 10:17 - So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Secondly, reading the bible helps and guides us in our prayers. The scriptures reveal the heart of God and reveal to us how we should pray. I've been inspired to try and read the scriptures through twice this year. That's only 6 chapters a day, or about 30 min. Is that really all that much time to give to God? Many people give much more time to the TV or facebook or work or sport or or hobbies or reading or whatever interests or motivates them. Remember that as Christians we will have to give an account of how we spent our time when we stand before the Lord at the Bema seat.

1 Corinthians 3:12-14 - ¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

It is not a judgement of condemnation, but rather reward. Our works will go through the fire so to speak and only what is done for the Lord, only what has eternal value will last, and we will be rewarded for those things that Christ did through us, the things we did that pleased God when we were living by faith and were motivated by love for Christ.

Another example of praying according to the Word of God is Moses: (up on Mt Sinai and the people ask Aaron to make a golden calf.)

Exodus 32:7-14 - ⁷ And the Lord said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. ⁸ They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!' " ⁹ And the Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! ¹⁰ Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation."

¹¹ Then Moses pleaded with the Lord his God, and said: "Lord, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹² Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them

out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people.
¹³ **Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'** ” ¹⁴ So the Lord relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.

Notice that just as Jesus prays for and intercedes for us, so we should be intercessors for others. The battle for the hearts and minds of unbelievers is won through both witnessing and prayer. Like Jeremiah, we are to be broken before the Lord, but bold before men. The most important people we can be praying for is our families. If we don't earnestly pray for them, then who will?

V2 The number of years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah: Daniel knew that effective prayer comes out of knowing and praying both God's word and our present circumstances. His study of prophecy showed him a *specific number*—the 70 years described in Jeremiah 25:11–13 and Jeremiah 29:10, and his knowledge of the times led him to know those passages applied to his time.

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.

i. Now, it is important to note that Daniel regarded these as *real, literal years*. They were in no way understood as symbolic years. I believe that this is a mistake many make with other passages of prophecy in other parts of the bible, especially the 1,000 year millennial rule and reign of Jesus after the 7 year tribulation period.

ii. Another factor that caused Daniel to pray was fulfilled prophecy. He was undoubtedly also familiar with Isaiah's prophecies concerning Cyrus. Imagine how encouraged Daniel must have been to see a man named Cyrus rise in power over Persia and then defeat Babylon.

Isaiah 44:28–45:4

²⁸ Who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd,
And he shall perform all My pleasure,
Saying to Jerusalem, “You shall be built,”
And to the temple, “Your foundation shall be laid.” ’

45“Thus says the Lord to His anointed,
To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—
To subdue nations before him
And loose the armour of kings,
To open before him the double doors,
So that the gates will not be shut:

² ‘I will go before you
And make the crooked places straight;
I will break in pieces the gates of bronze

And cut the bars of iron.

3 I will give you the treasures of darkness
And hidden riches of secret places,
That you may know that I, the Lord,
Who call you by your name,
Am the God of Israel.

4 For Jacob My servant's sake,
And Israel My elect,
I have even called you by your name;
I have named you, though you have not known Me.

V2 That He would accomplish seventy years: Daniel believed that God **would accomplish seventy years** of captivity, yet he prayed passionately that God would do what He promised to do. Daniel knew that God's promises *invite* our prayers and participation. They do not *exclude* our prayers and participation. Instead, God is looking for those who will stand in the gap, to intercede for others.

Ezekiel 22:30 -

So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.

i. "Nothing, therefore, can be better for us, than to ask for what he has promised." (Calvin)

ii. Here is a prayer that we can all start praying: *Even so, come, Lord Jesus! Maranatha!* (Revelation 22:20).

iii. But a second important reason is that Daniel asked God, in His mercy, to take the earliest of all possible starting points (Daniel's abduction) for determining the beginning of the 70 years. There were three waves of captivity:

- 605 B.C.—Jerusalem was attacked and Daniel and other captives were taken to Babylon.
- 597 B.C.—Jerusalem was attacked and treasure was taken from the temple.
- 587 B.C.—Jerusalem falls and the nation was exiled.

iv. Daniel wanted to prevail in prayer, asking God to take the earliest possible starting point to determine the 70 years. He wanted God's mercy to come to Israel 18 years earlier rather than 18 years later.

V1 Now, when did Daniel start praying? In the first year of Darius: This was still three or four years before 70 years had passed from 605 b.c. This was not too soon for Daniel to begin praying. Daniel had the foresight to look ahead three or four years and to begin praying.

V2 The word of the Lord through Jeremiah: Even in God's eternal decrees, God has an essential role for people to play. God's plan of the ages is declared, yet Jeremiah made a prophecy; Daniel made a prayer, and Cyrus made a proclamation

i. One of the dangers that face Christians today is that "Too often our interest in the prophetic Scriptures is of a curious and speculative nature, or else we conclude that God will carry out His sovereign purpose no matter what we do, and so we do not concern ourselves with those matters." (Strauss)

ii. I want to point out that there was nothing special about Daniel. He did not belong to a priestly family like Ezekiel and he wasn't a career prophet like Isaiah or Jeremiah. Yet like all of us, he could pray.

iii. In fact, Daniel's calling and station in life made it *less* likely that he would be such a man of prayer. He was a high government official who almost certainly had a busy schedule—yet he took time and energy to pray.

iv. “Do not, I pray you, get into the habit of neglecting the assembling of yourselves together for prayer. How often have I said, ‘All our strength lies in prayer’! When we were very few, God multiplied us in answer to prayer.” (Spurgeon)

Praying together unites and empowers us as believers as we pray according to the will of God together. The praying church is the only kind of church that God can use. If you want to be a part of what God is doing in the local body of Christ, then you need to be committed to that local body of Christ, your local church. Getting along to the prayer meeting is one of the most important parts of christian fellowship. There is nothing more powerful or encouraging than praying with other believers. Just like the family that prays together stays together, so the church that prays together stays together. One of satan's tactics to divide churches is to stop them praying together, which will eventually lead to disunity and division and complaining.

2. Daniel's preparation for prayer (3)

³ **Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.**

a. **I set my face:** This implies *determination* in prayer. Daniel had a goal to reach through prayer, and he approached God as a man who would not be denied. He did this because he was rightly convinced that his prayer was in the will of God, and knew it was not motivated by any selfish desire.

b. This is the same attitude that Jesus had towards the suffering He was to endure on the cross.

Luke 9:51 - Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem,

b. **To make request by prayer and supplications:** Daniel wasn't *passive* as God's prophetic plan unfolded before him. In his approach to God he made a **request**, *asking* God to perform His promise in the way that Daniel thought would bring God most glory.

i. “We ask but little, and God gives it.” (Spurgeon)

c. **With fasting, sackcloth, and ashes:** After the prompting to prayer, we see the preparation for prayer. Daniel set his face, which speaks of determination. Sackcloth is a hairy garment, camel's hair usually, turned inside out so the bristles of the camel continually rub against one's skin. What was Daniel doing? He was showing he was serious in seeking the Lord.

Fasting is a way we can seek the Lord in seriousness. Fasting is an important tool in the Christian arsenal both in doing battle with the enemy and in seeking our Father and His blessings. All day long, we're bombarded by advertising and noise. Not only are our senses bombarded, but our stomachs are constantly craving certain kinds of food. We're stuffing ourselves with this, that, and the other. Fasting is a practical way of saying, “I'm not going to continue showering myself with physical sensations and stimuli. I'm going to slow it down.”

Physiologically, you actually become a clearer thinker when you're fasting. Many tests confirm this. Fasting is good for us physically and helpful to us mentally. Fasting is not a way to score points with the Lord but an avenue to deny our flesh physically in order to concentrate on the spiritual realm with greater intensity. Fasting is not meant to prove

something to God but to simply place ourselves in a position where we can hear Him more clearly.

As a teenager, Daniel understood the importance of the fast. Here he is now, at eighty-six years of age, still fasting.

3. Daniel confesses the sin of his people, and glorifies the goodness and righteousness of God (4–15)

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!

So how does Daniel start his prayer?

a. **O Lord, great and awesome God:** Daniel began his prayer where we all should—by recognising the greatness and goodness of God. Sometimes we approach God as if He were a stingy person who must be persuaded to give us anything. But Daniel knew the problem was not with God. Why? Because God **keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him.**

i. Daniel’s prayer was remarkable for both its *understanding* and *earnestness*. Many pray with understanding but not earnestness; others are earnest but have no understanding in prayer. The two together are a powerful combination.

ii. “Oh! That our prayers could get beyond praying, till they got to agonising.” (Spurgeon)

b. **We have sinned and committed iniquity:** As Daniel confessed Israel’s sin he prayed as if he were as bad as the rest of Israel. (This was a confession of **we**, not *they*. In this

sense, *they* prayers never really reach God; genuine **we** prayers see self correctly and see our fellow saints with compassion.) - repeat (Guzik)

- i. Now, Daniel's confession of sin might seem phoney until we realise how passionately and completely he is focused on God. Compared to God, even the most righteous among us falls far short.
- ii. Jon Courson says, Wouldn't it be radical if we did that—if we really saw ourselves as one body? When you drop a hammer on your toe, the rest of the body doesn't say, "What a jerk you are, toe." No, the rest of the body immediately begins to aid or help the toe. The whole body gathers around the hurting member. But what do we in the body of Christ do? When someone drops the proverbial hammer, we find fault. That ought not to be. If I'm finding fault with people, there's a problem with me. Daniel, a truly righteous man, said, "We have sinned, Father," and, in so doing, models linkage and covering.
- iii. Another aspect of this is that Daniel realises the problems the people of Israel were experiencing were not because God was cruel but because they were sinful. When the judgments of God come down in the Tribulation period, the saints, angels, and elders in heaven say, "Righteous and true are Your judgments, O Lord" (Revelation 19:2). Not a single one says, "That's not fair!" They say, "What You're doing, Lord, is perfect." So, if we desire to be a mature brother or sister, one of the keys is to recognise that God is right in all He does. The reason we're in the mess we're in is because of sin. It's not God's fault. He's righteous and true in all He does.

c. **Righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face:** Daniel knew that Israel's sin was not God's fault; God was utterly righteous and blameless. Any **shame of face** belonged to Israel, not to God. The same applies to us today. Why is it important to have this understanding?

- i. It would be easy to *complain* to God about Israel's problems. Have you ever complained to God about your problems? Daniel didn't think for a moment that God was too hard on Israel; he knew God was completely righteous and any failure was on Israel's side.
- ii. So what is the opposite of complaining? Well, instead of *complaining*, Daniel *confessed*. During times of great revival among God's people, the Holy Spirit always brings a deep conviction and awareness of sin. When that is responded to rightly, confession is appropriately made. J. Edwin Orr gives a good principle to govern confession: "If you sin secretly, confess secretly, admitting publicly that you need the victory but keeping details to yourself. If you sin openly confess openly to remove stumbling blocks from those whom you have hindered. If you have sinned spiritually (prayerlessness, lovelessness, and unbelief as well as their offspring, criticism, etc.) then confess to the church that you have been a hindrance."
- iii. Genuine, appropriate confession will be sincere, specific, and thorough. Orr describes how in the 1952 revival in Brazil a woman in a crowded church confessed, "Please pray for me, I need to love people more." The leader told her gently, "That is not a confession, sister. Anyone could have said it." Later in the service the lady stood again and said, "Please pray for me. What I should have said is that my sharp tongue has caused a lot of trouble in this congregation." The pastor leaned over to Orr and whispered, "Now she is talking!"
- iv. This is praying from a low place, a place of humility, and is the only way to be effective in prayer.

d. **We have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God:** Not only did Daniel not complain about his circumstances, but Daniel did not make the slightest excuse for Israel's sin. He knew the fault belonged to Israel and Israel alone. We are prone to make excuses for our sin and often even make excuses in our "confessions."

e. **He has confirmed His words ... As it is written in the Law of Moses:** Daniel realised that even in His judgment against Israel, God was totally faithful to His Word. He promised that curses would come upon a disobedient Israel (in passages like Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28) and they did.

f. **All this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the Lord our God:** As Daniel confessed his sin and the sin of Israel, he remembered the sin of prayerlessness. Even when they faced great trial and calamity, Israel still did not make their **prayer before the Lord**. When we sense trial or difficulty, it should drive us *immediately* to prayer—*when we are not so driven, it should be a wake-up call to the coldness of our heart. Prayerlessness is a sin because it is a symptom of pride and self-sufficiency. It shows that we are living independent of God and not living as we should in humble dependance upon God.*

Micah 6:8

O people, the Lord has told you what is good,
and this is what he requires of you:
to do what is right, to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with your God.

g. **Who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand:** As Daniel prayed he remembered that the Lord delivered Israel from Egypt. He remembers the Old Testament standard of God's power, the deliverance from Egypt. The New Testament standard of God's power is the resurrection of Jesus (Ephesians 1:19–20). There is nothing that God can't do.

Ephesians 1:19–20 - ¹⁹ I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power ²⁰ that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honour at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.

4. Daniel asks God to forgive and to restore Jerusalem (16–19)

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. (*difference in attitude between law keeping and grace - explain*) 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."

a. **Let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem:** After his confession of Israel's sin and God's great righteousness, Daniel simply asked God to

mercifully turn His kind attention to Jerusalem and the temple (**cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary**). He also asked that God would do this without delay (**do not delay for your own sake**).

- i. Daniel prayed as a patriot—but a patriot more of the Kingdom of God than the Kingdom of Israel. We should pray with similar patriotism or loyalty for the Kingdom of God.
- ii. Daniel asked for all this **according to all Your righteousness**. It was as if Daniel prayed, “Lord, I’m not asking You to do anything against Your righteousness. I’m praying this to advance Your righteous glory.”

b. **Cause your face to shine**: This was the heart of Daniel’s plea. He knew that God’s people had many needs, but all their needs could be summed up in this: *they need God’s face to shine upon them*.

“Oh, that we might learn how to pray so that God should be the subject as well as the object of our supplications! O God, thy Church needs thee above everything else! A poor, little, sick, neglected child needs fifty things; but you can put all those needs into one if you say that the child needs its mother. So, the Church, of God needs a thousand things, but you can put them all into one if you say, ‘The Church of God needs her God.’” (Spurgeon)

c. **For the Lord’s sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate ... Do not delay for Your own sake**: Daniel’s prayer was consumed with the glory of God, not primarily with the benefit of man. His purpose in prayer was to see God’s work accomplished and His cause glorified.

- i. It isn’t wrong to pray for our own needs. Jesus invited us to ask, *give us this day our daily bread*. At the same time, we need to have an even greater passion for the glory and benefit of God than for our own needs.
- ii. This also speaks to *purity of motive* in Daniel’s prayer. Sometimes we pray for God to do a great work so we can be known as great workers for God. We need to pray for the sake of the Lord’s cause, both in our words and heart.

d. **We do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies**: Even before the time of the New Testament, Daniel prayed on firm New Testament ground. His confidence wasn’t in *his* goodness, but in *God’s* goodness.

- i. This is what it means to pray *in the name of Jesus*. Those aren’t words we tack on to the end of a prayer, but they should express the fact we are praying in merits and righteousness of Jesus, not our own.
- ii. Daniel was not great because he prayed. He was great because his prayer was the necessary expression of great trust and dependence on God. Many religious people spend countless hours in prayer but it achieves *nothing* because it is not rooted in the goodness and righteousness of God. *Self righteous* or *self trusting* prayer is of no power before God. “One of Satan’s most subtle delusions is that he succeeds in getting hundreds of thousands of men to trust in prayer, apart from faith in the shed blood of Jesus.” (Talbot)

Jesus explains what this looks like in:

Luke 18:9-14

⁹ Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: ¹⁰ “Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee,

and the other was a despised tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: 'I thank you, God, that I am not like other people—cheaters, sinners, adulterers. I'm certainly not like that tax collector! ¹² I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.'

¹³ "But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.' ¹⁴ I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

How do we apply this parable? Simple.

Don't think you have to give God a reason to bless you. Approach Him solely on the basis of His mercy. Otherwise, Satan will quench the Spirit of prayer in you by saying you have no right to pray.

e. **O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act!** Daniel prayed like a great wrestler, eager to gain an advantage. He sensed God's openness to each request and he responded with many rapid requests. Two quotes from Spurgeon:

i. "Follow up your advantage; build another prayer or the answer that you have. If you have received a great blessing, say, 'Because he has inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him; because he has heard me once, therefore will I call again.' " (Spurgeon)

ii. "Cold, half-hearted, prayers ask God to deny them: only persistent prayers will be replied to. When the Church of God cannot take 'No' for an answer, she shall not have 'No' for an answer. When a pleading soul must have it; when the Spirit of God works mightily in him so that he cannot let the angel go without a blessing, the angel shall not go till he has given the blessing to such a pleading one. Brethren, if there be only one among us that can pray as Daniel did, with intensity, the blessing will come." (Spurgeon)

Spurgeon is making reference to Jacob, who refused to let go of God when wrestling with Him until God blessed him. This is a great picture for us to understand. When God shows us what we should be praying for, then we should pray and wrestle in prayer until it is done. We should expect the answer and not give up. There are many parables in the NT that Jesus gave us. I'll just finish with one.

Luke 18:1-8

Parable of the Persistent Widow

¹ One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up. ² "There was a judge in a certain city," he said, "who neither feared God nor cared about people. ³ A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, saying, 'Give me justice in this dispute with my enemy.' ⁴ The judge ignored her for a while, but finally he said to himself, 'I don't fear God or care about people, ⁵ but this woman is driving me crazy. I'm going to see that she gets justice, because she is wearing me out with her constant requests!' "

⁶ Then the Lord said, "Learn a lesson from this unjust judge. ⁷ Even he rendered a just decision in the end. So don't you think God will surely give justice to his chosen people who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will grant justice to them quickly! But when the Son of Man returns, how many will he find on the earth who have faith?"

How many people will the Lord find praying fervently and effectively when He returns. Jesus says in Matthew 24:12 that in the last days the love of many will grow cold: Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold.

Don't let your love for the Lord grow cold. Instead:

Jude 20-21 - ²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the (power of the) Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.