

**PRAYING FOR A BACKSLIDDEN NATION
DANIEL 9:1-19**

Introduction

Last week I dealt with OUR need for revival as the people of God!
From the Book of Jeremiah we dealt with the various indicators to look at in
OUR lives that show us OUR need to get back to God!

What's wrong with our nation goes very much to what's wrong with our
Churches, our families, and ourselves as individual believers!

Most people, including those of us who are believers, are much better at
denying or excusing our sins and failures than we are at **admitting them,
confessing them, and repenting of them!**

Oh, we're quick to point out other peoples' mistakes, but we have a hard time
admitting when we've blown it!

Any believer with one eye and half sense can see the trouble our nation is in!
Yet, we see in our text, the nation of Judah was in even deeper than we are!
They had been carried off into captivity! In fact, at this particular time, they
had been there for a while! Almost 70 years!

**Here we see the prophet Daniel stirred to prayer for his nation! I want
us to take a look at 6 significant truths about praying for our nation from
the perspective of Daniels prayer for his nation that we see here in Ch 9!**

I. WE MUST PRAY BIBLICALLY! (Vs 1-2)

Can you picture Daniel reading and studying a copy of a portion of
Jeremiah's prophecy? Because that is what he was doing here!

He was now getting to be an old man. He had been carried away to
Babylon about 67 years earlier when God judged the nation of Judah
by the hand of a heathen nation and king! **(Daniel 1:1-2)**

Daniel **could have despaired!** But he didn't!

Daniel **could have given in to the wickedness around him!** But he
didn't!

Daniel **could have given up on serving the LORD!** But he didn't!

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Daniel still lived his life in view of God's purpose for him!

Daniel proved himself an able leader as what we might call the prime
minister under 3 successive kings.

(Daniel 1:21– Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, Cyrus)

Babylon had been judged...70 years of captivity were almost
accomplished...Daniel recognized from Jeremiah's prophecy that his
people are getting close to the time when God will allow them to return
to Jerusalem. **(See Jeremiah 29:10-14)**

**But Daniel realized that his people, God's people, were not
spiritually prepared!** The Lord was going to accomplish this
through prayer! So, being the man of prayer that he was, he set his
face unto the Lord God to pray, simply from reading and
understanding the prophetic Word of God!

Although things looked hopeless and it appeared impossible from a
human standpoint that the exile would end soon, **Daniel had a firm
word from the Lord!**

**Could I tell you that though things may look bleak and hopeless
right now for our nation, we have some prophecies and promises
in the Word of God to stand on as believers!**

**Oh, but what we need to do is seek the face of the LORD for our
nation and pray according to the prophecies and promises of this
Book!**

Even though God announced what He was going to do in Jeremiah 29,
**The LORD indicated very clearly that He would bring it about
through the prayers of His people!** As His people prayed, He would
accomplish what He was going to do!

**Prayer is so important that God will often delay what He says He
will do until we start responding in prayer! Prayer is one of the
LORD's ways of involving us in what He intends to do!**

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WE MUST PRAY BIBLICALLY!

II. **WE MUST PRAY WITH HUMILITY! (vs. 3)**

The term “*sackcloth*” is used 46 times in the Bible. **The custom of putting on this course goats hair material was a symbol of deep grief and mourning!**

Spreading ashes on the head was also a symbol of sorrow, deep grief and mourning but sometimes it was also a statement of guilt and it symbolized deep repentance! The ashes signified desolation and ruin!

In the Bible, the penitent person often covered their entire body with filthy ashes. Basically, when you put on sackcloth and ashes, you aren’t comfortable, and you don’t feel clean. **It was an outward sign of inner pain and agony as well as a public sign of repentance and humility before God!**

Very simply, sackcloth and ashes were used as **an outward sign of one’s inward condition. Such a symbol made one’s change of heart visible and demonstrated the sincerity of one’s grief and/or repentance. It was not the act of putting on sackcloth and ashes itself that moved God to intervene, but the actual humility behind that action!**

Fasting is another act of humility that enhances prayer. You fast because you are so serious about prayer that you don’t have time to eat. Fasting also teaches you to say “No” to your bodily appetites so that you can focus on prayer!
(Examples of these can be found in the Book of Esther, in the Book of Jonah, etc.)

Now understand that Daniel did not do any of this just as a public display of spirituality but as a private expression of his sincerity! When we are humble before God, others may see it, but we had better not be doing it for their sake, otherwise it ceases to be humility and just becomes a meaningless show!

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Often we may wonder why our prayers don’t seem to be getting past the light bulbs! **Could it be our pride and lack of humility?**
James 4:6–“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.”

James 4:10–“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”

1 Peter 5:6-7–“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: 7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”

WE MUST PRAY BIBLICALLY...WITH HUMILITY!

III. **WE MUST PRAY WITH INTENSITY! (Vs. 3-4)**

In **verse 3** Daniel said “*And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications*”

“*I set my face unto the Lord God*” means his focus was on the LORD!
No distractions here!

“*...to seek...*” means “*to search out; and implies to strive after*”, again, we see his focus!

Then in **verse 4** Daniel said, “*I prayed unto the LORD my God...*”
The Hebrew word translated “*prayed*” is an emphatic imperative that denotes extreme intensity and speaks of interceding!

So many of our prayers are just a bunch of vain repetitions!
Don’t our prayers seem anemic compared to Daniel’s!?

I’m afraid that many of us are like the little boy who said his prayers one night and got his prayers confused with his other rhymes,
“*Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If he hollers let him go . . . eeny, meeny, miney, mo.*” *What?*

Too often our prayers seem so dull and lifeless!

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Daniel's prayer was filled with urgency and fervency!

Ten times he says something like, "O Lord" or "O my God."

The word "O" is actually an untranslatable word that represents a groan. Romans 8:26 says that when we are praying, "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

Have you ever agonized in prayer like that? Have you ever strived with God and groaned when you prayed?

The last part of James 5:16 says that "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

The words "effectual, fervent" come from the Greek word that we get our word "energy" from. It means *to be active, efficient*.

The question is 1) Do we believe that?... and 2) Is our life in tune with God such that our prayer life can be described as fervent and effectual? i.e. Is your prayer life active? If not, then it's not going to avail much!

WE MUST PRAY BIBLICALLY...WITH HUMILITY...WITH INTENSITY...

IV. WE MUST CONFESS SINS SPECIFICALLY! (Vs. 4-14)

Daniel poured out his heart to God in **verses 4-5! (Read it!)**

He doesn't make excuses! Instead, we see that he admitted that the nation of Israel had gotten exactly what it deserved! He does not blame anyone else for their misery! Drop down to **verse 13! (Read it!)**

This is a prayer that needs to be prayed in our Church and throughout America today!

When you read Daniel's prayer you notice that his confession is both **personal and collective!** He speaks about HIS sin even though Scripture does not record Daniel doing anything wrong!

He recognizes that he is part of a community of sinners when he says, "We have sinned!" He didn't say, "Oh, Lord they have sinned!" Have you ever noticed how easy it is to confess other peoples' sin?

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Daniel recognizes that he is part of a group that has been punished by God for their SHARED SINS! While Daniel may not have been directly responsible for the sins that caused his people to be sent to Babylon for 70 years, **he took responsibility for his part! He owned it!**

Question: Have we ever taken that kind of responsibility for the sins of our nation? Have we owned our part in them?

We are much better at making excuses and pointing out the blame in others than we are at confessing our part in sin!

We live in a "no-fault" culture where we have "no-fault" insurance, and in some places get a "no-fault" divorce. One of the mantras of our modern culture is, "Hey, it's not my fault!"

And we've come up with some pretty names to excuse our SIN! We say, "I goofed" or "I blew it" or we talk about "mistakes" or "weaknesses."

What we call an "affair," God calls "adultery."

What we call "a little weakness," God calls "wickedness."

What we call "a mistake," God calls "madness."

Proverbs 28:13—"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

Do we spend time regularly confessing our personal sins to Jesus or do we spend our time concealing our sins from others?

Daniel was not only willing to confess his sins; he was willing to repent, that is, to change his behavior! There can be no true confession without repentance! *Confess* literally means "to say the same thing."

If we think we can continue to sin and then just run to God and flippantly say, "Oops, sorry I did it again," then we don't really understand the holiness of God!

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True confession always starts with the general and then proceeds to the specific. Notice what Daniel said in verse 5: “*we have sinned and have committed iniquity and have done wickedly.*” That’s general.

Then he gave some specific examples of how they had done this:
Vs. 5: “*...and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments.*”

Vs 6: “*Neither have we harkened unto thy servants the prophets...*”

Vs 11: “*Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice...*”

Listen, it’s important to get detailed with God, because **in confession we aren’t informing God** of our specific sins, **we are agreeing with God about those things we have thought and done and said!**

Daniel admitted that the mess they were in was their own fault! You know, one of the major hindrances to prayer is that some of God’s people are angry with God and feel like God has let them down!

Not so with Daniel. You can’t find a trace of anger towards God in this prayer! Daniel put the blame squarely where it belonged - on himself and on his people!

There is perhaps nothing harder for us to do than to admit we are WRONG! But if we are going to open up the avenue of prayer, we must own up to the fact of our sin!

WE MUST PRAY BIBLICALLY...WITH HUMILITY...WITH INTENSITY..CONFESS SINS SPECIFICALLY!

V. WE MUST ASK FOR GOD’S GLORY! (vs. 15-19)
Notice verse 17. Daniel said that his prayer is “*for the Lord’s sake.*”

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If my counting is correct, I think you’ll find 19 different times in this prayer that reference is made to God while man is referenced only 11 times.

Too many of our prayers are focused on OUR needs and concerns! Daniel prayed this prayer for the return and rebuilding of his nation and it is believed that he died before these events were fully implemented! We have no record that he ever returned to the Holy Land. He wasn’t praying for himself because He was praying for God’s glory!

The Bible is full of humility and doxology! The healthy heart bows down in meekness and rises in praise and adoration!

We need to realize that God saved us for His purpose and for His honor and for His glory!

Daniel’s petition is not for God to act in the way that best “meets man’s needs,” but rather for God to act in His own best interest!

Daniel’s prayer then concluded with a holy boldness as he pleads with God to act. **Look at verses 18-19!**

Daniel’s confession was the result of his deep sense of the majesty of God as displayed in His divine attributes! In verse 4, he called God “*great and dreadful.*” In verse 14, he referred to God as being “*righteous in all His works which he doeth.*”

James 4:3–“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”

Could it be that one of the reasons our prayers are so ineffective is because we’re praying with wrong motives?

Maybe we need to try praying with the Glory of God as our goal, not our personal gain and watch what God does!

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WE MUST PRAY BIBLICALLY...WITH HUMILITY...WITH INTENSITY...CONFESS SINS SPECIFICALLY...ASK FOR GOD'S GLORY...

VI. WE MUST TRUST GOD TO ANSWER! (vs. 20-23)

Daniel received an answer to his prayer even before he finished praying! While it doesn't always happen that way, many times when we pray, God answers us before we even get up off our knees! That's what happened here!

Isaiah 65:24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

Before Daniel could even say 'Amen,' the answer was there for Him! How great was that?! But it is not always that way! Yet we should believe and act as though God has already answered! Because God always answers prayer! Sometimes the answer is yes, sometimes it's no, and sometimes it's wait. But He always answers prayer!

Conclusion

So in closing, Daniel's prayer begins with praise for who God is and for what He does. It then moved into confession, which led to his petition. Sounds a lot like the structure of the Lord's Prayer, doesn't it?

We need to pray the same way. Begin with the awesome character of God, move into confession and then finish with our requests and base all of this on our study and meditation of the Word of God! When we do, we'll pray like Daniel did and receive answers like He did!

There are so many ways we can apply this passage today but I want to just mention one application.

God's people had really messed up! They had sinned repeatedly and because of their refusal to repent, were sent to another country as a direct result of their disobedience. But, God never forgot about them, did He? He had plans to bring them back, plans to prosper them and to give them hope again!

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Friend, no matter how much we have sinned, there is always the promise of mercy, grace and forgiveness as we turn to God in humility and confess our sins.

Someone asked the question: "How far can you go in sin before God will no longer forgive you?" Well, no one knows because no one has ever gone that far. As long as you have breath, there is a chance to get it right!

Did you catch why Daniel's prayer was answered so quickly? **Take a look at Verse 23.**

God answers our prayers because we are greatly beloved. It's nothing that we do. God's love is poured out on us through Jesus. *Romans 5:8—"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."*

God longs to give us good things when we pray as Romans 8:32 states: *Romans 8:32—"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"*

If you've never put your faith in Jesus for forgiveness of sins, you need to do it. God answers the prayers of those who are beloved - you can become that by putting your faith in Jesus! You can have your name recorded in the Book of Life and be assured of a heavenly home prepared by Jesus Himself!

Whatever God has told you to do, don't put it off!