

Daniel 9:1-19
January 3, 2016

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: If the Lord emailed us a “report card” for our prayer life in 2015, what would you anticipate He would tell you regarding the areas of improvement? [Let people chime in – be more consistent, listen more than petition, rarely confess sin, include fasting, be less rote, find a place of quiet without distractions]

If you’re like me, we all want to grow in our prayer life and have a deeper walk with God. We want to have a more intimate relationship with Him and hear His voice often. I’d dare say we’d all take whatever that “next step” is to improve our prayer life.

As I evaluate my own prayer life, I think I have strength areas in my prayer life, i.e. I do have a set time in the morning that I pray, and I have a consistent set of prayers on a Word document that I want to make sure I pray over you, my family and friends, pastors, I pray boldly in numerous prayer requests. However, I definitely have deficiencies or areas of improvement!

Confession of sin is not something I do enough. If I haven’t done something blatantly wrong, I just enter my prayer time without asking for any kind of forgiveness for sin. Yet, I know there are times throughout my day that I have some “stinkin’ thinkin’” toward someone else, or don’t give someone the benefit of the doubt, or whatever, and those things are just as egregious and weighty to God as something I could do that goes against His Word. I need to include confession on a daily basis, and what’s sad is that I used to prayer journal using the E.M. Bounds journal, and I wrote a prayer daily using the ACTS outline. But when I stopped prayer journaling when the E.M. Bounds fillers were no longer in print, I lost momentum and stopped.

I also don’t integrate fasting into my prayer life, yet Jesus expects me to. If we go to the gospel of Matthew, Jesus says, “***When you fast***, don’t be like the Pharisees...” It needs to be incorporated, but I haven’t done so.

I also think I talk too much. I think God would appreciate it if I would just sit still with pen and paper in hand and just listen and record the thoughts that come to mind and see how He’s speaking to me. That requires being in a distraction-free environment.

Transition: We all have room for improvement, and I believe God would be ecstatic if we each did an honest assessment of our prayer life and chose just one “next step” that would bring us closer to Him. I don’t think He’s looking for us to leap tall buildings in a single bound, but any decision we make that enhances our prayer life is a win.

Daniel is going to give us a model of prayer that would take us to a much higher level of prayer. What we’ll learn today is meaningful because he shows us how to approach God, especially when we need to hear answers from God. After today’s study, I believe ***all of us can expect***

*answers to our prayer BY incorporating the **ELEMENTS** of prayer that Daniel models for us with humility.* Let's look for them.

BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Dan 9:1-19]

V.1:

- In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom—

V.2:

- in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.

V.3:

- So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.

V.4:

- prayed to the LORD my God and **confessed**: “O Lord, **the great and awesome God**, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands,

V.5:

- **we have sinned and done wrong**. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws.

V.6:

- We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

V.7:

- “Lord, **you are righteous**, but this day we are covered with shame—the men of Judah and people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you.

V.8:

- O LORD, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you.

V.9:

- **The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving**, even though we have rebelled against him;

V.10:

- we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets.

V.11:

- All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. “Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you.

V.12:

- You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing upon us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem.

V.13:

- **Just as it is written in the Law of Moses**, all this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth.

V.14:

- The LORD did not hesitate to bring the disaster upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him.

V.15:

- “Now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day, we have sinned, we have done wrong.

V.16:

- O Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, **turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem**, your city, your holy hill. Our sins and the iniquities of our fathers have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us.

V.17:

- “Now, our God, **hear the prayers and petitions of your servant**. For your sake, O Lord, **look with favor on your desolate sanctuary**.

V.18:

- Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. **We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy**.

V.19:

- O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! **For your sake**, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.”

Process Observations/Questions:

Q v.1-2: What prompted Daniel’s desire to pray to God? [Based on his knowledge of Scripture (Jer 25:11-2), he understood that the desolation of Jerusalem would last 70 yrs.]

Background: Keep in mind that Daniel is in his 90s now! Remember he was 16 when he and the Israelites were deported from Jerusalem to Babylon. So 74 years have gone by, and he’s wondering if or when he’ll ever see his homeland again.

Q v.3: Daniel exercises some important practices that go with prayer. What are they? [pleading and petitioning the Lord while fasting and wearing sackcloth and ashes]

Q: What does sackcloth and ashes symbolize? [It was a sign of mourning in grief or repentance.]

Q: Why do you think Daniel included fasting as a practice? [X-Ref Isa 58:1-9]

Observation: I think it’s important to get the picture here. Daniel is a devout, God-fearing man, who never swerved from God’s teaching and made stands for Him when necessary. He was a student of the Scriptures to know Jeremiah’s prophecy. He’s in his 90s and he is approaching God with humility, yet we can tell he’s coming at this prayer time with intensity. He’s observing every practice he knows to humbly submit himself before the Lord in order to receive an answer from God. So let’s go through his prayer and see if we can identify the **ELEMENTS** of prayer that Daniel uses:

- V.4 – Confession
- V.4 – Praise (The Lord is a great and awesome)
- V.5 – Corporate confession of sin (We have sinned and done wrong)
- V.7 – Praise (The Lord is righteous)
- V.9 – Praise (The Lord is merciful and forgiving)
- V.13 – Scripture (Just as it's written in the Law of Moses...)
- V.16 – Petition (turn away your anger and wrath from Jerusalem)
- V.17 – Petition (look with favor on your desolate sanctuary)
- V.18 – Humility (Requests not made b/c we're righteous, but b/c of your great mercy)
- V.19 – Glorify God ("for your sake" do not delay b/c the city bears your Name)

LOOK:

We learned the ELEMENTS of prayer: Confession (individual and corporate), Praise, Scripture, Petition, Humility, and Glorifying God. But we also learned that when we submit to the Lord with humility and confess our sins, fast, and come with genuine repentance, He is more than willing to answer. Here are some reflection questions to ponder as you leave today:

Q: When would you “go all out” with a prayer like Daniel’s, preceded by fasting and repentance?

Q: Do we follow Daniel’s lead if we only yelled at your kids? Wouldn’t that be over the top?

Q: Do you go to prayer with a high level of expectancy that He will answer you?

Ask the Lord to show you what your **next step** is to grow in your prayer life. He will answer!!

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (Da 9-12)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

These closing chapters contain some of the most detailed prophecies in the Bible, and most of them have already been fulfilled. We want to focus our attention in chapter 9, because an understanding of “Daniel’s seventy weeks” is basic to Bible prophecy. This chapter deals with two different periods of time as related to the Jews.

I. Seventy Years of Captivity (9:1–19)

A. The prophecy (vv. 1–2)

Daniel was a student of the OT Scriptures, particularly those prophecies that related to the destiny of his people. He was now nearly ninety years old. He was reading Jer. 25:1–14, and the Lord caused him to see that his people would be in Babylon for seventy years. Note that God does not give people “visions and dreams” when He can teach them through His Word. Today His Spirit teaches us through the Word. Beware of “new revelations” that are supposed to come from dreams and visions. Daniel realized that the seventy years of captivity were about to close. Babylon invaded Palestine and began its siege in 606 B.C., and Daniel understood the prophecies in the year 539–38 B.C.; so there were but two years left in the seventy years promised by Jeremiah. What an exciting time Daniel had in his Bible study that day!

B. The prayer (vv. 3–19).

The Word of God and prayer go together (Acts 6:4). Daniel did not go out and boast about his insight into the Word; in fact, he did not even preach a sermon. He went to his knees in prayer. This is the true attitude of the humble Bible student. It is sad to see “prophetic truth” making boasters instead of prayer warriors out of people. How strange it was for the people to see the former prime minister wearing sackcloth. Daniel’s prayer is one of the greatest examples of intercession in the Bible. He confesses his own sins and the sins of his people. He reviews Bible history and confesses that the nation has been wicked and God has been righteous to judge them. He knew the warnings Moses had given (v. 13, see Lev. 26), and he knew that he and his people deserved far greater disaster than God had sent to them. It is wonderful to see Daniel identifying himself with his sinning nation, though he himself had not been guilty of these sins. After confessing his sins and the sins of the people, Daniel begins to pray for Jerusalem (vv. 16–19). No doubt he had often prayed for the holy city; in fact, this is one reason why God blessed him and made him to prosper (Ps. 122:6–9). But why pray for the prosperity of a desolate city? Because God had promised not only to end the captivity, but also to take the Jews back to their land that they might rebuild their temple. See Jer. 29:10–14 and 30:10–24. In Isa. 44:28, God promised that Cyrus would permit the Jews to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. So, Daniel was laying hold of these great promises and turning them into believing prayers. Now we will see how God answers his prayers. (Note how Daniel’s prayer in Dan. 9 is similar to those in Ezra 9 and Neh. 9.)

Pentecost, J. D. (1985). Daniel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 1, pp. 1359–1360). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

B. The vision of the 70 “sevens” (chap. 9)

1. THE OCCASION OF THE VISION (9:1–2)

9:1–2. It was now **the first year** of the reign of **Darius the Mede**. (On the identity of this Darius see comments on 6:1.) This was 539 B.C., 66 years after Daniel had been exiled.

The overthrow of **the Babylonian Kingdom** by the Medo-Persians was indeed a momentous event. It had been revealed to Belshazzar through Daniel’s interpretation of the writing on the wall (5:25–28, 30). The Babylonian overthrow prepared the way for liberation of the Jews who had been in exile since Nebuchadnezzar’s first invasion of **Jerusalem** in 605 B.C. Besides predicting the overthrow of the people **Jeremiah** had also predicted that Israel’s sojourn in Babylon was to **last 70 years** (Jer. 25:11–12).

Evidently moved by Darius’ victory **Daniel** searched **the Scriptures** to understand the events of which he was a vital part. He **understood** Darius’ victory meant that the termination of the 70-year Captivity was near. Thus these significant events became even more momentous for Daniel.

2. THE PRAYER OF DANIEL (9:3–19)

a. Confession (9:3–14)

9:3–6. Daniel’s study of the Scriptures led him to turn to **God** and to pray a **prayer** of confession (vv. 3–14) and **petition** (vv. 15–19), with **fasting**. Wearing **sackcloth and/or ashes** was evidence of mourning in grief or repentance (cf. Gen. 37:34; Neh. 9:1; Es. 4:1, 3; Isa. 58:5; Jer. 49:3; Ezek. 7:18; Joel 1:8; Matt. 11:21).

Moses revealed the principle on which God would deal with His covenant people: obedience would bring blessing, and disobedience would bring discipline. One form of discipline was that Israel would be subjugated to Gentile powers (Deut. 28:48–57, 64–68). Israel’s experience in Babylon was the outworking of this principle.

Then Moses revealed the basis on which the discipline would be lifted and the nation would be restored to blessing (Deut. 30). She would have to return to God and obey His voice; then **God** would turn back her Captivity and restore the people to the land from which they had been dispersed and shower blessings on them.

Daniel evidently was fully aware that the years in Babylon were a divine discipline on Israel. Knowing that confession was one requisite to restoration, he **confessed** the sin of his people, identifying himself with their sin as though he were personally responsible for it.

Daniel noted that blessing depends on obedience, for **God ... keeps His covenant of love** (*hesed*, “loyal love”) **with all who love Him and obey Him**. Even a covenant people cannot be blessed if they disobey. Four times Daniel acknowledged that his people had **sinned** (Dan. 9:5, 8, 11, 15). Their sin was a sin of rebellion (cf. v. 9) against God and in turning **away** (cf. v. 11) **from** the Word of God (His **laws**; cf. vv 10–11) which they knew. God in grace had sent **prophets** (cf. v. 10) to exhort the people to return to Him but they had refused to heed their messages (**we have not listened**). **Kings** and **people** alike stood guilty before God.

9:7–11a. Daniel then acknowledged that God is **righteous** (cf. vv. 14, 16) and just in disciplining Israel for her **unfaithfulness**, for which she was **covered with shame** (vv. 7–8) and dispersed (**scattered**) into foreign **countries**. God’s discipline did not mean that He had withheld mercy (cf. v. 18) and forgiveness from His people, but it meant that He, being righteous, must punish people’s rebellion and disobedience (v. 10). They refused to keep God’s **laws** (v. 10; cf. v. 5) for they **transgressed His Law** (v. 11) and **turned** from God (cf. v. 5), being obstinate in their disobedience (**refusing to obey**).

9:11b–14. Because of her rebellion and disobedience Israel was experiencing **the curses and ... judgments written** by **Moses** (cf. v. 13) in Deuteronomy 28:15–68. In spite of the severity of the discipline, including **great** national **disaster** (Dan. 9:12), the nation was not **turning from** her **sins** and submitting to the authority of **the Law**, God’s **truth**. **This disaster**, the fall of Jerusalem, was because **God is righteous** (cf. vv. 7, 16) and Israel had **not obeyed Him** (cf. vv. 10–11).

b. Petition (9:15–19)

9:15–16. Daniel began his petition (v. 15) by mentioning two of the same things with which he began his confession (vv. 4–5): God’s greatness and the people’s sin. Daniel spoke of God’s delivering Israel **out of Egypt** by His great power (**with a mighty hand**). God was glorified through the deliverance of His people. But because the nation had **sinned** (Daniel’s fourth time to state that his people had sinned; cf. vv. 5, 8, 11) she had become **an object of scorn** to those nations **around** her. In prayer that God, **in keeping with His righteous acts** (cf. vv. 7, 14), would **turn away His anger and ... wrath from Jerusalem**, Daniel was asking that God’s discipline might be lifted and the people freed from their present bondage. (Jerusalem is God’s **city**; cf. v. 24, and His **holy hill**; cf. v. 20; Joel 2:1; 3:17; Zeph. 3:11.)

Once again Daniel attributed the nation’s present status to her past sin, the **sins and ... iniquities of our fathers** (cf. Dan. 9:6, 8).

9:17–19. Having prayed for the negative, the removal of God’s wrath (vv. 15–16), the prophet now prayed for the positive, God’s favor, mercy, and forgiveness (vv. 17–19). Daniel asked that **God** would **hear his prayers** and restore (**look with favor on**) the **sanctuary** (the temple in Jerusalem) for His **sake** (cf. v. 19). And he wanted God to **hear** his request (**give ear**) and to **see (open Your eyes)** the city’s **desolation**. Interestingly Daniel did not specify what God should do; he only asked that God “look” on the sanctuary and “see” the city, both in desolation for many years.

Daniel based his requests on God’s **great mercy** (cf. v. 9), not on the nation’s righteousness for she had none. But because God is merciful and forgiving, he prayed, **O LORD, listen! O LORD, forgive!** Concerned for God’s reputation, Daniel wanted the **LORD** to **act** quickly (**do not delay**) on behalf of the **city** and **people** that bore His **name**. All this would bring glory to God for it was **for His sake** (cf. v. 17).