

**Intro-** We've been exploring Daniel 9, and the last time I met with you we learned that this chapter takes place from 10-12 years after Daniel's visions of ch. 7 and 8.

- \* Cyrus and Darius of the Medo-Persian Empire have just taken over the Babylonian Empire, Daniel is in his 80's, and Darius has just placed Daniel in high leadership. (in ch 6)
- \* The chapter begins with Daniel praying in the first 19 verses. Last time, we saw that these are the prayers that got Daniel in trouble and thrown in the lion's den in Ch. 6.
- \* **As Daniel talked with God, the text shows us 3 things about his prayers- We learn--**  
I. Why Daniel prayed. II. How Daniel prepared to pray. III. What Daniel focused on in prayer.

**A few weeks ago we explored the - 3 REASONS WHY DANIEL PRAYED. (v2)**

#### **A. DANIEL PRAYED BECAUSE HE UNDERSTOOD GOD'S WORD.**

- \* Daniel knew from Isaiah's prophecy that God would lead Cyrus of Persia to rebuild Jerusalem and its Temple, and Cyrus had just come to power with his co-leader Darius.
- \* And as Daniel read Jeremiah's prophecy that said Judah would only be in captivity in Babylon for 70 years, that time had arrived, so he knew this would happen soon.

#### **B. Secondly, DANIEL PRAYED TO MOTIVATE GOD TO KEEP HIS PROMISE.**

- \* Daniel knew that in some divine way, God uses our prayers to accomplish His purposes, so Daniel was praying that what God promised would surely come to pass.

#### **C. Third- DANIEL PRAYED BECAUSE ISRAEL WAS SPIRITUALLY ASLEEP.**

- \* There were millions of Jews scattered all over the Empire, some for 175 years, some 60 yrs; And they were settled and comfortable in this pagan land.
- \* Daniel prayed because it grieved him to think that when the decree was given by Cyrus that the Jews could return to Israel, it might be that NO ONE would want to go back.
- \* So Daniel is prays so God would change their hearts to return to Him, and their land.

## **II. HOW DANIEL PREPARED TO PRAY. (read 9:3) [6:10] )**

- \* The bible shows us it's important to pray, but also, that we should prepare to pray well.
- \* When Jesus prayed or taught His men so, he did things to prepare Himself for effective prayer. (went alone on a mountain, deep in the garden, fasted, told followers- go to your closet)
- \* Here, Daniel did certain things, (not necessarily required) but helpful for him to pray effectively.

### **A. DANIEL GAVE HIS FULL ATTENTION TO GOD. (3a)**

- \* Daniel "turned to the Lord God", literally - he "gave himself over" to pay full attention to God.
- \* This refers to focusing our heart and mind on one thing- the Lord, so that all else becomes secondary, and we face God wholeheartedly. (No distractions)

### **B. DANIEL PRAYED FERVENTLY. (3b- "I pleaded with Him in prayer and petition")**

- \* The Hebrew words refer to serious, passionate prayer- Q-"serious enthusiasm".
- \* If we're not careful, it's easy for prayer to become routine and mundane.
- \* Daniel's pleading in prayer came from a firm belief that God was in control and that He could change things, which caused Daniel to pray fervently that God would act.
- \* Jesus' stories. A man woke a neighbor at midnight and wouldn't leave him alone until he gave him food for his guests. A hurting widow pleaded until the uncaring judge helped her.

James 5:16- NKJV- "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much".

- \* The words 'effective and fervent' come from the Greek word- "energeo"- energy.

- \* They describe fervent zeal that touches God's heart.

Q- If it were possible for God to sleep, would our prayers be His lullaby, or His alarm clock?

### **C. DANIEL PRAYED IN SELF DENIAL. (v3-- "in fasting, sackcloth, and ashes")**

- \* Daniel observed these 3 OT practices that showed self-denial as he prayed.

#### **1. Daniel fasted. In the bible fasting was practiced in 3 ways.**

- At times, spiritual leaders called people to fast for some important reason. (Joel 1:14, 2:15)
- Sometimes, one consciously chose to fast to focus their heart on a spiritual issue. (2Sa. 12)
- But most often, people were naturally driven to it because of deep concern for a situation. (they didn't feel like eating or ate very little) (Ezra fasted over Judah's sin. 10:6)

## **2. Daniel put on Sackcloth-**

- This fabric was like burlap - scratchy and uncomfortable.
- A person wore it during serious times of prayer, simply to express how spiritually uncomfortable they were with the situation that they were praying God would change.

## **3. Daniel used Ashes.**

- Ashes were placed on the head or face, or a person might sit in a pile of ashes. (Job)
- Ashes are dirty so this expressed grief and a humble heart to show how sinful and unworthy one considered themselves, compared to God's complete purity and holiness.
- Daniel's prayer shows him constantly humbling himself before God by saying how unworthy Israel was to receive God's forgiveness, favor and blessing.
- Instead of praying in pride, as if he and the Jews deserve something from God, Daniel approached God with grief and great humility.
- In Gen 18:27- Abraham told God- "I am nothing but dust and ashes".
- Job said in 42:5-6- "My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

**Summary-** These practices were not required (unless God commanded them), and they were not to be self-righteous works, to impress God, or others.

- \* The lesson is- Daniel prepared to pray by doing things that settled his mind and heart completely on God, humbled him before God as he prayed, and showed his deep grief and seriousness about what he prayed for.
- \* As we pray, we might use these or other things that promote the same attitudes as we focus our hearts on God to pray about something serious.
- \* It could be finding a special place or time to pray, where we're not interrupted.
- \* In the bible, people often prayed while kneeling, or even laying on the floor. (David)
- \* The important thing taught here is ---  
Approaching God is serious, and the things we pray about should be serious to us.

**Q-** In our prayers, why should God be concerned if we're not?

Why should God work in a situation, if we won't work at prayer?

Why should God be moved to act, if we're not moved deeply to pray fervently?

Why should God rescue us, if we won't humbly admit how deeply we need Him?

### **III. WHAT DANIEL FOCUSED ON IN PRAYER    3 things.    (the body of the prayer)**

\* He recognized God's character, he confessed sin, he made requests.    (**read whole- 4-19**)

#### **A. DANIEL ACKNOWLEDGED GOD'S CHARACTER.**

\* Daniel shows that he had a deep and true understanding of who God is.

\* Effective prayer will not happen unless we understand the One we pray to.

Q- "The less we understand of God, the more faulty our prayers will be, and flawed prayers may even offend God rather than endear Him."

\* Ps 80:4 speaks of God's anger against Israel's prayers. Isa 1 says God hated their prayers.

\* Daniel expressed 8 traits about God, and some of them he affirmed more than once.

#### **1. Daniel declared God's greatness.    (in v4 he called Him - "the great God")**

- This word refers to all that God is, and lifts Him high above anyone else.

- And the word is mostly linked to God's great power.    (Neh. 1:5, 9:32)

- Daniel knew God was great and powerful, and could move, work and change the situation Daniel was praying about.

- He knew God was stronger than Assyria and Babylon who brought them there, stronger than Persia who held them there, stronger than king Cyrus who could free them, and stronger than the Jews who were still unrepentant.

- Daniel knew God had told Judah through Jeremiah that God had brought them into captivity by His power, and Daniel knew that God could restore them to their land and previous greatness, by His power.    (Is there anything too hard for God?)

#### **2. Daniel declared that God is Awesome. (v4- "the awesome God")**

- This word means- 'to inspire awe and reverent fear'. Seeing God as awesome means that His infinite greatness astounds us, which produces deep respect that fears Him.

- The reason the Jews were in captivity, is because over time they had ceased to grasp how amazingly powerful and holy God is, and failed to follow him in fear and reverence..

- Daniel approached God as the One who is to be deeply respected and feared above all else, who can do immediately and over time, as He pleases.

(Both the OT and NT word not only refer to respect but also to terror)

### **3. Daniel declared- "Lord, you are righteous" (7a) (14b- "righteous in all He does")**

- Daniel knew God had not made a mistake by bringing the Jews into captivity, and that the wrong was on the part of Israel, not God.
- Most of the Jews had not acknowledged this, but believed God had done them wrong.
- App-** We can be tempted to believe God has failed us and done wrong in a situation.
- But true prayer believes God cannot and will not do wrong, is not late, unaware, slothful, unconcerned, hasty, too harsh or mild, unfair, or anything else regarding wrong.
- God is utterly holy, and can never fail in any way. This is difficult for some believers to grasp, and it's rarely understood by the lost- who most often blame God when things go wrong.

### **4. Daniel recognized God's patience. (This is implied in v5-6, 10-11- read, 13]**

- Here, Daniel remembered Israel's sin from Moses on (a long time). The nation did well under Joshua and David. But later, Solomon brought in his wives pagan gods.
- The Jews partly observed Judaism, but also worshiped idols in the city and at the Temple.
- God sent all kinds of prophets to denounce their sin, but they were mostly ignored.
- A few Godly kings brought minor returns to God, but wickedness returned when they died.
- God was offended as they ignored various warnings, and after extreme patience, God judged.
- Solomon died in 931, the nation split, paganism was dominant, and God waited 200 years to send Assyria to take the 10 northern tribes, then 125 more yrs to send Babylon for Judah.

**Key- Israel's big failures was - they interpreted God's patience as approval,**  
which offended God even more. (2 Chron. 36:14-16, Ps 78:35-38)

- The world doesn't see God as holy and patient, they see Him as excusing or approving of sin.
- Today, sin is either not sin, or they think God sees it as minor, and really no big deal.

**ILL-** What used to be detestable is now viewed as how people were created.

Babies are tissue, sexual relations are free, not confined by God for marriage alone.

- But true prayer knows- God doesn't condone or wink at sin, but that He is very patient.
- He expects us to grow and correct wrong behavior, and acknowledge that our life always needs work, and know that He is patient, rather than thinking He condones our sin.
- As Daniel confessed Israel's long term, ongoing sin, he expressed how unbelievably patient God had been with His disobedient people. (He is patient now- 2 Pet. 3:3-7)