

Series: A Purposeful Heart

TO SEEK BY PRAYER

DANIEL 9:1-19

Text: Daniel 9:3

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³ *And I set my face unto the Lord God, **to seek by prayer** and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:*

Introduction:

John Owen, a Puritan writer, has said: “What an individual is in secret on his knees before God, that’s who he really is, and no more.”

Let’s consider some truths from this passage about our praying.

Note we are:

1. TO PRAY BIBLICALLY (VS. 1-2)

Daniel 9:1-2

¹ *In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; ² In the first year of his reign **Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet**, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.*

No doubt Daniel studied the scripture.

He was an old man, approaching 90 years of age. He had been sent to Babylon almost 70 years earlier and had proven himself as the prime minister under 3 successive kings. Here's what he was reading from Jeremiah 29:10-12:

Jeremiah 29:10-12

¹⁰ *For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. ¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. ¹² Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.*

Daniel has been in captivity for 67 years at this time.

He recognizes that his people are only 3 years away from returning to Jerusalem. He also realizes that they are not spiritually prepared, so he is driven to his knees in prayer, simply from reading and understanding the Word of God.

I picture Daniel reading the Scriptures and then spending some time meditating upon what he had just read.

Then he prayed.

Even though God announces what He is going to do in Jeremiah 29, He also indicates very clearly that He will bring it about through prayer.

Remember:

Prayer is not a way to get God to work for us it's His way of involving us in what He intends to do.

Note not only are we to Pray Biblically, but also we are to:

2. PRAY WITH HUMILITY (VS. 3)

Daniel 9:3

³ And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and **sackcloth, and ashes**:

Daniel takes off his beautiful robe and jewelry and dresses himself in simple rough burlap. The term “sackcloth” is used 46 times in the Bible and was a symbol of deep grief and mourning.

Spreading ashes on the head was more of a statement of guilt and symbolized deep repentance.

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.

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.

Note not only are we to Pray Biblically, and Pray With Humility but also we are to:

3. CONFESS SIN SPECIFICALLY (VS. 4-14)

Daniel 9:4-14

*⁴ And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; ⁵ **We have sinned**, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing*

from thy precepts and from thy judgments: ⁶ Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. ⁷ O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. ⁸ O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. ⁹ To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; ¹⁰ Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. ¹¹ Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. ¹² And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. ¹³ As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. ¹⁴ Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon

us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice.

When you read Daniel's prayer you notice that his confession is both personal and collective.

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?

True confession always starts with the general and then proceeds to the specific.

Note not only are we to Pray Biblically, Pray With Humility and Confess Sin Specifically but also we are to:

4. ASK FOR GOD'S GLORY (VS. 15-19)

Daniel 9:15-19

¹⁵ And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. ¹⁶ O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy

people are become a reproach to all that are about us.

¹⁷ *Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, **for the Lord's sake.*** ¹⁸ *O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.* ¹⁹ *O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, **for thine own sake,** O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.*

Close:

May we follow this pattern in prayer.