



A PATTERN OF PRAYER FROM A MAN OF PRAYER

“24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. 25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. 26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. 27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

- Daniel 9:24-27

A Pattern of Prayer from a Man of Prayer

Here is one of the richest portions found in Daniel 9 all of holy Scripture. On the subject of prayer, it has few equals. It doesn't teach by precept, it doesn't teach by theological truth or doctrine, but rather by practice or pattern or model or example. Here we see a man of God praying. And we can take apart this prayer and look at all of its rich components in understanding what the prayer of the godly should contain.

And this isn't just any man. Everybody knows about Daniel. Either we know about the lion's den or the fiery furnace or the visions that he had or the uncompromising integrity of his youth when he was endeavoring to keep his heart and his mind devoted to God against all the onslaughts of Babylonian brainwashing. We know about this man Daniel who was taken into captivity into Babylon when Jerusalem was destroyed. He was deported along with others of the very best of the young potential leaders in Israel. And when the Babylonians took all of the remaining Israelites into Judah, the southern kingdom, captive, they wanted to have some people they could train to rule over these alien people who would be serving them in Babylon. And so, they looked for the best, and Daniel was among the best of the young.

By the time we find him here in our chapter, he's over 80 years of age. And as we have read, in the prior eight chapters, the story of this man, we have found him to be a man unlike other men, a man whose level of spiritual devotion is beyond most, if not nearly all. One whose love for God is unwavering. One whose excellence in devotion and duty is stalwart. He really is standard for us. He is bold. He is uncompromising. He is faithful. He is selfless. He is humble. He is loyal. He is resistant to the world. He is persistent in devotion to God. He is incorruptible, trustworthy, virtuous, obedient, reverent, and all the other adjectives you could think of. He's a man also devoted to God in prayer – which is, of course, part of the reflection of all those other characteristics. He is an amazing man. He is so devout and so committed to communing with God, his life is so built on prayer that he would rather be thrown into a den of lions and eaten alive than alter his prayer life. Certainly, he's the one, if not our Lord Himself, he is the one to teach us how to pray. And here we have a model prayer of Daniel.

The ninth chapter of Daniel is for many Bible students a very familiar chapter. But sad to say in one sense, people are most familiar with the back half and not the front half. We are

familiar with the answer to Daniel's prayer that brings us the prophecy of the seventy weeks, which starts in verse 24. Seventy weeks of years determined on the history of Israel, from the decree of Artaxerxes to restore and rebuild Jerusalem to the arrival of Messiah, when He came into the city of Jerusalem, and they waived the palm branches at His feet. Seventy weeks of years are laid out until the Messiah comes. And then another week to come and a pact with the man of sin, the Antichrist, and all of those incredibly unique and important elements of that prophecy that predicts the Messiah and even later the Antichrist and a seven-year period of tribulation to come, further defined in the book of Revelation itself. So the prophetic part of this chapter is known to most Bible students. And it's important and it's wonderful and it's rich and it connects with all kinds of other eschatological passages in the Bible to help us frame up our understanding of the end. But more necessary for us than the details of the future in our daily walk with the Lord is to understand the matter of prayer. And the prophecy that came to Daniel was essentially an answer to this prayer. It was God's answer to this model prayer.

As we come to the ninth chapter, Daniel is in great distress. If you notice the end of chapter 8 and verse 27, you will see that he says, "I, Daniel, was exhausted and sick for days." Sometimes what's going on in our lives in terms of ministry can be so overwhelming as to make us physically sick. Daniel was suffering from what he was hearing from God. He knew that the children of Israel were under current judgment. That's why they were in captivity. That's why he was there. He knew Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple was destroyed, the sanctuary was desolate. He knew all that. And he knew this was a judgment for sin. And he knew that there was more judgment coming in the future against the people of Israel because he had had a vision of that.

But he also knew that there was a coming kingdom. He had a vision of that. And all of this was colliding in his mind. He knew there would be a future glorious kingdom of God's anointed One, but he also knew that there would be a judgment upon Israel. He had no one to interpret even the visions about the kingdom and the future. And so he was distressed by not being able to understand fully what they meant. He was feeling a little bit of what Peter said the prophets felt when they searched for what person and what time was being referred to when they were writing these things down. So as much as was revealed, much more was not, and he was feeling the distress of not fully understanding that and also knowing that all was not well with Israel, and there was to be more judgment in the future.

And so out of this sickness, out of this heartbrokenness, out of this spiritual exhaustion, he tried to pick himself up in verse 27 and carry on the king's business, because he was prime minister. Eighty-plus years of age and he had ascended, because even the pagans can recognize a man of such sterling character and promote him properly to the highest rank in the land under the monarch. But he is stunned and astounded at the visions and left without a full explanation. There's a big burden in his heart, and that burden is over his people. And it is that burden that he discharges before the throne of God in this ninth chapter.

Verse 1 sets the chronological historical setting. "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans – in the first year of his reign I, Daniel" – the Babylonian Kingdom had ended. It had ended. He had seen it end. He had seen the demise of Nebuchadnezzar who became like a wild beast living in the field for seven years. He had been there at Belshazzar's feast when God wrote on the wall, "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN." You are found wanting, weighed in the balances and found inadequate. He has seen the demise of the great, vast Babylonian power. He is now in the first year of the Medo-Persian Kingdom, the first year of Darius' reign. He has been used by God to explain visions and revelations to Nebuchadnezzar. He has experienced the power of God in being rescued from a den of lions. And now he's had some amazing visions. But he doesn't fully understand how it all will work out.

One day at this time he is reading. He is reading scrolls, biblical scrolls, verse 2. And it says, "I, Daniel, observed in the books" – or the scrolls – "the number of the years which was revealed as the Word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolation of Jerusalem, namely seventy years." He's reading Jeremiah, who by the way, he calls a source for the Word of the Lord. He had a right view of biblical inspiration. And as he's reading in Jeremiah, he is reading in chapter 25. They didn't have chapters and verses in the Jeremiah scrolls in those days, but for us this would be where he found this, Jeremiah 25:11. Here is the prophecy from Jeremiah of what was going to happen, and it did happen, and Daniel had lived it. He had been taken into captivity in the earliest of captivities, and he's been there the whole time.

So, in Jeremiah 25:11, "This whole land," writes Jeremiah, "shall be a desolation" – speaking of Israel – "and a horror and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon" – or these peoples

shall serve the king of Babylon – “seventy years. Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,’ declares the Lord, ‘for their iniquity and the land of the Chaldeans and I will make it an ever-lasting desolation.”” God says, seventy years I’m going to let the Babylonians hold Israel in captivity, and then I’m going to punish that Babylonian Empire with an ever-lasting desolation. Well Daniel had seen it. The Babylonian Empire was over. The seventy years had come.

He also in reading in the text of Jeremiah came across another portion of Scripture in the twenty-ninth chapter of Jeremiah, which added another feature to it in verse 10, “Thus says the Lord, ‘When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope. And you will call on Me and come and pray to Me and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. And I will be found by you and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from the nations”” – and so forth. So he knew that at the end of the seventy years there would be the destruction of Babylon, which had happened. And there would also be the restoration of the people of God. That’s what he was reading in the books. Seventy years, for all intents and purposes, was up. He knows what’s been promised to happen. Babylon will be destroyed. It was. The people will be restored to the land. That hadn’t happened yet but that was what God promised.

That teaches us the first characteristic of prayer. One, prayer is in response or in harmony with the Word of God. True prayer is in response or in harmony or in agreement with the Word of God. Daniel takes up intercession for his people based on what he knows is God’s will. This is an essential element of prayer. You say, well if he knew this was going to happen because Jeremiah said it was going to happen, and if he knew that he said it was going to happen after seventy years and the seventy years was up, then what is there to pray for? That’s a fair question to ask. It’s not a simplistic question to answer other than to say this, God will do what He does when He says He will do it. God is faithful to His promise. God always keeps His word, never deviates from His word. He’s absolutely sovereign, always accomplishes His purpose. It can never be thwarted. He said after seventy years Babylon will be destroyed. They were. After seventy years I’ll bring the people back, they were brought back. And you ask the question, why are we to pray? And the answer is because

all prayer is to be in accord with, in agreement with, in harmony with, and in response to God's Word.

You think about John at the end of the book of Revelation. He's had, like Daniel, visions of the future coming of Christ. And at the end of the book of Revelation in the final chapter, Jesus says, "Behold, I come quickly." And what is John's response? Good. Is that what he said? No. He says, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." And that might seem to you like a strange prayer in light of the fact that Jesus said He was coming. But that is in essence the nature of prayer. Prayer finds its foundation in the purposes of God. Prayer is when you align your heart to God's purposes. It's when you say, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," even though you know it will be. Sovereignty of God, the inevitable purposes of God, prophetic revelation, promises of God do not preclude prayer. They do not preclude supplication. Rather, they call for it. We pray in response to God's revealed plan. We pray primarily to line our hearts up with divine purposes.

You could ask the same question about why do we witness anybody? God's going to save whom He's going to save. But He's chosen personal testimony and the preaching of the gospel to be the means by which He saves His own, and He's chosen prayer to be the means by which He accomplishes His purpose. That's why James could say, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much." God chooses not only the ends, but He chooses the means.

Apart from that, it is of immense benefit in communing with God to line yourselves up with His will. Daniel realized prayer was an element in the fulfillment of the Word, but it wasn't that technical understanding that caused him to pray. He wasn't just saying, "I'd like to be on the deal here." He couldn't help himself because his love for God was so great, his attachment to God so profound, his desire for the purposes of God to be revealed was so encompassing that he couldn't restrain himself from pleading for God to do what he knew God would do. Prayer is primarily a way to line our hearts up with God's purposes. He knew the certainty of divine promise. He knew the certainty of divine purpose. He understood the sovereignty of God. At the same time, he was a man of incessant prayer. And you find this many, many places in Scripture. We don't have time to look at even a portion of them, but just a couple of illustrations.

Ezra in chapter 9 verse 1 says, “Now when these things had been completed, the princes approached me saying, ‘The people of Israel the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the people of the lands.’ In other words, they’re still intermarried. They’re still mingled. They’re still idolatrous. “They’ve taken,” verse 2, “some of their daughters as wives,” and so forth. “The holy race has been intermingled with the peoples of the land; indeed the hands of the princes and rulers have been foremost in this unfaithfulness. And when I heard about this matter, I tore my garments and my robes,” says Ezra. “I pulled some of the hair from my head and my beard and sat down appalled.” I would say he was pretty stressed. You start ripping your clothes and yanking your hair out, throw yourself on the ground and sit down, appalled.

“Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel on account of the unfaithfulness of the exiled gathered to me and I sat appalled until the evening offering. And at the evening offering I rose from my humiliation even with my garment and my robe torn, and I fell on my knees and I stretched out my hands to the Lord my God and I said, ‘O my God, I’m ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to Thee, my God, for our iniquities have risen above our heads, our guilt is grown even to the heavens ... We have been in great guilt, and on account of our iniquities, we, are kings, and our priests have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plunder, to open shame, as it is this day. But grace has been shown from the Lord our God to leave us an escaped remnant. God has not forsaken us.’”

He didn’t sit back and coolly say, well you know, they sinned so they’re going to get it and there’s a remnant that believes and we’re going to receive grace. He was plunged, passionately into intercession, confessing the sins of his nation and celebrating the graciousness of God to a remnant. So appalled that he sat for a day with his clothes ripped, disheveled, he was so burdened. It wasn’t that he resigned himself to anything. His heart was so attached to God that when God was dishonored he was feeling the pain. When his people suffered he felt the pain.

In Ezra chapter 8 when the people gathered to hear the law written, they heard the law – wonderful. They bowed down. They worshiped the Lord when the law was read. In response to the reading of the law, Nehemiah chapter 9, “The twenty-fourth day of the month, the sons

of Israel assembled with fasting, sackcloth ... dirt.” They threw dirt all over themselves, a sign of humility. “The descendants of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners, stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. While they stood in their place, they read from the book of the law of the LORD their God for a fourth of the day, and for another fourth they confessed and worshiped the LORD their God.” This is just what people do when they really hear the Word, when they are touched by the judgments of Scripture and touched by the grace of Scripture, the salvation that God provides. The Word generates our prayers because it reveals the purposes of God, and our hearts are drawn into those purposes. We pray for those that are lost in sin and headed for judgment. We pray on the one hand God will be vindicated in judgment, on the other souls will be rescued from judgment. We praise God for acts of grace and salvation and deliverance. Praise God for His saving work.

In fact, I’ve learned through the years that my best prayer times are with an open Bible. You have a difficulty praying because you’re sort of done in a few minutes, you can’t think of what to say, just try praying through a text of Scripture, identifying with what God is revealing there. And when you need to confess, confess. And when you need to praise, praise. And when you need to thank Him, thank Him. And when you need to seek understanding and wisdom, ask for that. And when you see something that dishonors God, cry out of your concern for His dishonor. And when you see something that glorifies Him, give Him glory. The Word really teaches us how to pray because it reveals God’s agenda and God’s character.

And Daniel is reading the scrolls and out of the scrolls came the plan of God. And once he knew the plan of God and that it was coming to fruition and it was ready to take its next turn and restoration was to come for the people of God, he was motivated to pray. So Daniel’s prayer, first of all, like all prayer, should be born out of the study and understanding of God’s revealed plan and character in Scripture.

Secondly, we pray not only generated by God’s Word but grounded in God’s will. He knew God’s will. Seventy years, verse 2. He knew the whole thing, the desolations of Jerusalem were to be completed in seventy years and that is because that’s what Jeremiah had said. And you might say, well that of all things makes it unnecessary to pray. Why in the world is he going to pray for restoration if he knows it’s going to come? And again, that begs the same issue, that God has not only chosen what He will do, but the means by which He will do it. And those people who are most attached to God, who most love God, who most embrace His

glory will find themselves drawn into prayer that relates to His purposes. They will say with John, yes, I know You just said You're coming, but I'm telling You, even so come, Lord Jesus.

You remember those martyrs in the book of Revelation who were under the altar. They are those who were martyred in the time of the tribulation, the time of the tribulation yet to come in the future would bring about horrific slaughter and martyrdom. And we find some of these martyrs pictured under the altar and they are crying with a loud voice, "How long, O Lord, holy and true will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth? How long? How long?" How long is the question.

Well, they had read the seventy weeks of Daniel prophecy, which I'm sure they will have, they would know that that period of time is a seven-year period. The book of Revelation says three and a half years, forty-two months, and so forth. It wasn't that they had no clue, it was that they simply entered into the reality of what God was going to do because He couldn't restrain their hearts. Do, God, what You're going to do. Do what You're going to do. This is not fatalism. Fatalism is deadly to prayer, and it demonstrates that you do not know the heart of God and that you do not participate in His purposes with all your soul.

Look at 1 Samuel 12. Here's another illustration of this. First Samuel 12, now the people, you know, wanted a king, because they wanted to be like everybody else. They were having problems in the neighborhood, in the Middle Eastern neighborhood, sort of, "We have a king and you don't. Ya, ya-ya, ya-ya, ya," kind of thing. And so they thought, well if we're going to fit into this neighborhood, we need a king. And so they forced the issue. Verse 19 of 1 Samuel 12, "All the people said to Samuel, 'Pray for your servants' – Samuel, you need to pray for your servants – 'pray to the Lord your God that we may not die' – pray for us that we don't get killed – 'for we have added to all our sins this evil by asking for ourselves a king.'" You've got to intercede for us. We are in some deep trouble with God.

"Samuel said to the people, 'Do not fear. You have committed all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. You must not turn aside for then you would go after futile things which cannot profit from or deliver because they're futile. For the Lord will not abandon His people on account of His great name, because the Lord has been pleased to make you a people for Himself.'" Look, God is not

going to destroy you. It's not going to be over, because God's name is at stake. His reputation is at stake. If you were all destroyed, it would be bad for the reputation of God. All the rest of the nations around would say not only do the Israelites not have a king, but they have a God who can't protect them. This would not be good for God's reputation. God will not abandon His people on account of His great name. He's got His own reputation at stake here, and He's not going to abandon you. Still, look at verse 23, and notice the context, "Moreover, as for me" – you might have thought he would say, why am I going to pray for you, I just told you God's not going to abandon you? But he says this, "Moreover, as for me in regard to your request, far be it for me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you." That's a strange response, isn't it? It seems like the opposite of what you would expect. Oh, he's not going to do it. Great news, you don't need to worry about us. I would sin against the Lord if I didn't pray for you. There's no fatalism here.

Once you know the will of God, you know how to pray, because your prayers God uses as means to the end of His purpose. Whatever you ask according to His will, He hears. Whatever you ask according to His will, He hears. So says John 14:13 and 14, 1 John 5:14 and 15. We can't live in some kind of gray acceptance. We can't live in some kind of bland neutral posture saying, oh well, God's going to do what He's going to do and what's my prayer going to have to do with anything? That is a mark of spiritual immaturity and carnality. Prayer in God's will is a form of rebellion, on the one hand, rebellion against the world, rebellion against its fallenness, rebellion against its sinfulness. Prayer according to the will of God is affirmation. It is acquiescence. It is celebration of the divine purpose. Daniel would not accept the way things were. He wanted the fulfillment that God had promised. And so that's how he prayed. In fact, that's really the only safe ground to pray on. Peter said this, "The end of all things is at hand. Therefore, be sober for the purpose of prayer." You had better think seriously about prayer, the end is near.

Somebody might say, well, if the end is here, what are we praying about? Hasn't God figured it all out already anyway? You don't ever want to get to the point where you say, well, because God has chosen you, it's not important to evangelize. Because God has chosen who is going to be saved, it's not important to pray for them. That's a kind of fatalism that fails to understand the tension that exists within the sovereignty of God and our responsibility and the same exists in prayer. Prayer works just the opposite way and so does evangelism. Because we know that God has chosen some for salvation, we are motivated to go in the

power of the Spirit and with the gospel to be used by God to reach them. And because we know the purposes of God have been revealed in Scripture, and He will do His holy will in the end, we are motivated to pray in line with that, that we may participate, and our prayers be used in the fulfillment of that will.

Daniel prayed because it was generated by the Word of God, and it was grounded in the will of God. There's another element, it was characterized by fervency. You could say, okay, I accept it's the Word of God, I accept it's the will of God, but you know you sort of just accept it. Okay, God, do what You're going to do. I affirm it. It's a great plan, carry it out. I vote for You, God. I hope You do that. That isn't the way we see Daniel pray. Verse 3, "I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications with fasting, sackcloth and ashes."

Now we already know that Daniel was persistent in his prayers. He was very persistent. He prayed at intervals every single day his whole life, just praying. Back down in verse 20, he's still speaking and praying when the answer comes. He was a persistent prayer. But we're not talking so much about frequency here, we're talking about fervency. We know from chapter 6 that prayer was a lifestyle for Daniel. That's what got him in the lion's den.

But we're talking here about fervency in prayer. He says in verse 3, "I gave my attention" – the NAS. The Hebrew actually says I set my face. I fixed my gaze. I pointed my face in the direction of God. This is an undistracted kind of preoccupation. This is resoluteness. Unto the Lord God – the Lord God, the Lord Adonai, unto the Lord. Adonai means master sovereign ruler. Yes I understand the sovereignty of God. Yes I understand divine authority, fully. Yes I understand that I am to submit to the sovereignty of God. He is my sovereign, my Master, My Lord. But I set my face to the sovereign one to plead with Him in prayer and supplication to the degree of fasting, wearing sackcloth and pouring ashes on my head. All this was ways in which to manifest passion, brokenness, contrition, humility, meekness, cry for mercy.

Fasting in the Scriptures is always linked with prayer, except with the Pharisee who said, "I fast twice a week," which did him no good. He did it as a way to demonstrate his superficial holiness. But all true fasting is connected to prayer in the Bible. People fasted because they were so burdened with things that they were praying for that they had no interest in food. There was no particular virtue in the fasting, the virtue was in the preoccupation, the

resoluteness, the setting of the face toward God. He set his face toward the sovereign and to seek the sovereign with such fervency that he didn't eat. He was like Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:8. Hannah was weeping and fasting, pleading for a son. It was like Esther who was fasting and praying for life, or like the Ninevites who were under the preaching of Jonah were fasting and pleading for forgiveness.

Very often in the Bible they wore sackcloth, a sign of humiliation, unworthiness. Job, you remember, sat in ashes and threw ashes on his head as a sign of his despair and his humility. Job even in chapter 1 shaved his head. The Luke 18 Publican smashes on his chest. There's crying, throwing dust on your head, ripping your clothes, as we already read about, sighing, groaning, crying out loud. The Bible speaks of a broken heart, a broken spirit, pouring out one's heart, rending one's heart, making sacrifices. All of this expresses the fervency of prayer.

Daniel employs then every indication of fervency. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man," James 5:16. This is him. Christ in the Garden is praying so fervently. What's He praying, you say. He's praying to the Father and saying to the Father, "If this cup may pass from Me, Father, please let it be so. Nevertheless, not My will but Yours be done." He knew what the will of the Father was. He was a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. He knew the plan from beginning to end, that didn't change the fervency of His prayer. He accepted God's answer but in the prayer sweat blood, because He was praying with such fervency that the capillaries exploded. Jesus never resigned Himself to anything and He knew the will of the Father perfectly, and neither does Daniel and he knew the will of the Father. It's just that when you're really caught up in the agenda of God, there's a fervency in your life. And it's a commentary on our kind of Christianity to look at our indifference toward the issues that concern the heart of God. Sin and lostness and the corruption of the church and the pollution of the church with false doctrine and the naivete of so-called Christians and their indifference and their worldly preoccupations, all of those things are the kind of things that wrench the heart of the servant of God. You remember the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 11 talking about being whipped and beaten with rods and shipwrecked and stoned, but he says the worst of it is concern for the churches, because who is weak and I'm not weak, who is falling into sin and I don't feel the pain? I mean, that's the bottom line. The true man of God, the one who has God's heart, feels what God feels. The reproaches that fall on Him fall on me, and zeal for His house eats me up.

So true prayer is generated by the Word of God, grounded in the will of God, characterized by fervency, and let me give you a fourth one. And this is getting to the heart of it. It is identified with God's people – it is identified with God's people. We've already indicated that, because that's the nature of this prayer. But true intercessory prayer really is not preoccupied with self. It's very hard to find a prayer in Scripture that's just very personal. There are a few. Prayer is identified with God's people. It's very hard for the true believer, the godly person, to pull himself out and demand from God things that relate to him apart from any consideration of the rest.

That's why in Daniel's prayer you just notice the pronouns. Verse 5, "We have sinned;" verse 6, "We have not listened to Your servants who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers;" verse 7, "To us belongs open shame;" verse 8, "Open shame belongs to us;" verse 9, "We have rebelled;" verse 10, "We did not obey the voice of the Lord our God;" verse 11, "All Israel has transgressed;" end of verse 11, "We have sinned against Him;" verse 13, "We have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Thy truth." It's just we – we. Verse 14 at the end, "We have not obeyed His voice;" verse 15, "We have sinned. We have been wicked." This is like Ephesians 6:18 praying always with all prayer and supplication for all the saints. I mean, even Jesus taught us to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses ... Give us our daily bread." It's not give me mine. The focus of our prayer is, after we have come to really know the heart of God, is to carry the needs of everyone. Carrying the needs of everyone is characteristic of the prayer of a faithful person because Galatians 6:2 says we will bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Daniel was coming before the Lord for his people. To pray for those around us in the first circle of family and friends and then around us in the next circle of acquaintances and then around us in the next circle and on and on it goes. We need to be consumed and burdened not for our own enterprises and the achievement of our own goals and our own ends, but we need to embrace with solidarity the people of God. He regards even the sins of his people and the sins of his priests and the sins of his rulers and judges and kings as if they were his own. He cannot divorce himself from his people, because he knows he's part of the problem. I can't pray a prayer, "Straighten Your church out, Lord. Straighten out Your church," without saying, "And straighten out me in the process." I can't say, "Lord, bring the truth to Your

people. Lord, may Your people love the truth,” without saying to the Lord, “And wherever there’s error in my life, correct it.” I can’t say, “Make Your people godly,” and not say, “And make me godly, too.” Because 1 Corinthians 12:26 says, “If one member suffers, the whole body suffers.” Right? Self-righteous people repudiate that kind of identification. Self-righteous people are isolating themselves. And that’s exactly what you see in Luke 18 where the Publican says, “I thank You that I am not like this man.” He separates himself. That’s a certain giveaway that he’s not godly. The truly godly man would have said, “I recognize that I’m just like him. My sins may be different, and they may be less, but I’m as much in need of mercy as this Publican.”

Daniel understood as did all the Jews the solidarity of the people of God. I don’t know if we fully understand the solidarity of the people of God today in our church and in the body of Christ. We all suffer together. I’m telling you; we all suffer together. You know that. Sometimes your Christianity is discredited because of the Christianity that some of your friends see on the television that has nothing to do with you. Or worse perhaps, sometimes your Christianity is discredited because somebody has had personal contact with a so-called Christian who brought such reproach on the person of Jesus Christ that that has caused them to reject you. You’re not an island, and we must be critics, and Daniel was a prophet to the people, and he told the truth. But at the same time, to be a true intercessor, you have to identify with God’s wayward people, and you have to put yourself in the middle and say, “And I need to be what I need to be, just as well as God’s people need to be what they need to be.” The secret of intercession is we and us and ours.

Prayer then is generated by the Word of God; it’s grounded in the will of God; it’s characterized by fervency; it’s identified with God’s people, and intercession is built on confession – it’s built on confession. I want you to catch this. He wants God to do his work. He wants God to restore Israel, Daniel does, and God said He would. He wants to see Jerusalem rebuilt, the temple rebuilt, the sanctuary restored, God’s presence to come back – that’s what he wants. But before he ever even gets close to that, look at this prayer. Verse 5, “We have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Thy commandments and ordinances.” Boy, that’s saying it every way you could say it. We sinned; we committed iniquity; we acted wickedly; we rebelled, and we turned aside – five ways to say it. And he says we’re sinful.

Verse 6, “We haven’t listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers, all the people of the land. To us, verse 7, belongs open shame; verse 8, “Open shame belongs to us;” verse 9, “We’ve rebelled;” verse 10, “Nor have we obeyed.” Keeps on going like that. Verse 11, “A curse has been poured out on us” – end of the verse – “because we have sinned.” We have suffered great calamity; he says in verse 12. “This calamity,” verse 13, “has come on us.” And even in the midst of that, “We haven’t sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Thy Word” – or Thy truth. “Therefore, the LORD has kept the calamity on us.” “We’ve not obeyed His voice,” end of verse 14. He sums it up in 15 at the end of the verse, “We’ve sinned, and we’ve been wicked.” This is an awful lot of confession here.

You’d say, does he have to keep saying it and saying it and saying it and saying it and saying it and saying it every way possible? It isn’t – this is not some kind of technical approach to prayer. This is what is in the man’s heart, and this is very personal. Even though it’s we, we, we, if you go over to verse 20, “Now while I was speaking and praying and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel” – your prayer has to be predicated on an understanding of your unworthiness. So that we always know when we pray, I have no right to ask. I have no right to enter Your presence. There’s nothing in me that makes me worthy to hear an answer and to be blessed, because I’m just a sinner. I’m a sinner like Isaiah. I’m a man with unclean lips and I live in the midst of people of unclean lips. And you say, Isaiah, you’re the prophet of God. You’ve got the best mouth in town. No, no, no. You see, this is the heart of prayer. The foundation of all prayers is this: I don’t deserve anything. It’s the pounding the breast again, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” I have sinned. I have committed iniquity. I have done wickedly. I have rebelled. I have turned aside. I have not listened to the prophets. I have not been faithful to the truth. It even says in verse 7, “To us belongs open shame.” Actually, the word is the confusion of face, a distorted face that comes to one who’s under shame and distorts his face. Shame of the heart distorts the face.

No matter who these Jews were, they’ve been driven out of their land. The proud Jews were now refugees with distorted faces, bearing the shame of their iniquities, and curses had fallen on them. Verses 11 and 12 take you back to Deuteronomy 28, the curses that God pronounced originally when they arrived in the land. And He said, “If you don’t obey Me, you’re going to be cursed.” And they had been and a great evil, a calamity, a terrible thing had happened as the righteous judgment of God fell and that was their being carried into

captivity. All our prayers need to be built on this concept of confession and knowing that we're worthy of nothing. Oh God, I don't deserve anything. I'm a sinner. I'm a rebel. I just ask You to fulfill Your purpose. Fulfill Your plan. Do what You promised to do. Restore Your people. I'm interceding on their behalf. We pray for the salvation of sinners. We pray for the sanctification of the saints. We pray that the truth may prevail in the church. We pray that the church may be purified. We pray for all the needs of people around us. But we're overwhelmingly aware of the fact that we don't do anything to earn an answer. It's all mercy. It's all grace.

And another thing that's important about prayer, and now we're getting to the heart of it. Prayer is generated by God's Word, grounded in God's will, characterized by fervency. It is identified with God's people. It is built on confession. And here is a critical key, it is dependent on God's character – it is dependent on God's character. You say, what in the world would make me think I had a right to go to this God? Go back to verse 4, "I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed, and this is what I said, 'Alas, O Lord'" – alas, O Lord – "the great and awesome God" – now that might keep us away. That's transcendence. But – "the God who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments." That's eminent. God is both transcendent and eminent. And down in verse 7 he says, "Righteousness belongs to Thee, O Lord." Our God is great, awesome, and righteous or holy.

Down in verse 9, however he says, "To our God belong compassion and forgiveness." Yes He's great. Yes He's awesome. Yes He's holy. But He's also a faithful God who keeps His promise, a God of lovingkindness, a God of compassion, and a God of forgiveness. He's a Savior, verse 15, "Our God brought us out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and made a name for Himself. "So we go to our great and our awesome and our holy God knowing that He is also a God of lovingkindness; He is a God of compassion; He's a God of forgiveness; He's a God who saves. And we ask. We ask what is consistent with His Word and His will. We ask fervently, and we embrace His people in the asking and even the lost as we plead for His mercy on their behalf.

There's one final element and we end. The purpose of prayer is God's glory. We could say it consummates in God's glory. Verse 16, here's the ending. "O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your

holy mountain. For because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Thy people have become a reproach to all around us.” He’s saying, God, now that’s enough. Turn away Your wrath. Turn away Your anger. “And so now, our God,” verse 17, “listen to the prayer of Thy servant and to his supplication” – and here it comes – “and for Thy sake, O Lord, let Thy face shine on Thy desolate sanctuary.” The point he says is God, we’re not asking for our sake. We’re asking for Your sake. The glory of God is the consummation of all prayer. Whatever glorifies You. Whatever glorifies You. God, do You understand what’s going on? Do You understand what the people and the nations think about You? You are a God, the God of Israel. You couldn’t protect Your people. Your city was destroyed. Their temple was destroyed. Their sanctuary was destroyed. Their land is desolate. They have been hauled off into captivity. God, that’s not good for Your reputation. God, hear this prayer, answer this prayer, and You promised to restore Your people. Your Word is at stake. Your name is at stake. Your reputation is at stake.

In verse 18, “O my God, incline Your ear and hear. Open Your eyes and see our desolations in the city which is called by Thy name. We’re not presenting our supplications before Thee on account of any merits of our own.” We dealt with that in the confession section – “but on account of Thy great compassion” – here it comes – “O Lord, hear. O Lord, forgive. O Lord, listen. O Lord, take action” – because we deserve it. No. “Do it for Your own sake, O my God. Don’t delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name.” Your reputation is at stake. Pray for the church and say, O God, purify Your church. It bears Your name – it bears Your name. Here is the true man of prayer. His one consuming passion and that is the glory of God. Bow with me in just a moment of prayer.

This is convicting. I have been convicted by this truth and I know you have. And I don’t know in each case how God has driven this into your hearts, but we all fall short in the area of prayer. Some of you don’t know Christ. You have no access to God whatsoever in prayer. Some of you know Him but you have been indifferent in your prayer life. You have not been fervently consumed with His purposes and His causes. It’s time for you to reassess your life. Some of you desire to join our church. Some of you desire to be baptized. You haven’t been obedient in that. Whatever is on your heart, we’d love to help you and after the final prayer, the prayer room in the front to my right will be open. There will be men and women there to talk with you and pray with you. You come if we can help you in any of these matters or any other.