

## GREAT BIBLE PRAYERS – Daniel Prays

**DANIEL'S PRAYER OF CONFESSION  
DANIEL 9**

**"I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments." (Daniel 9:3-5)**

**"True Confessions"** is a magazine that has been published for over 60 years. It is a magazine targeted at young women readers featuring tawdry love stories and illicit affairs mainly among or between high profile persons. An independent review of the magazine was titled "True Confessions: Sixty Years of Sin, Suffering and Sorrow."

Daniel chapter nine could teach the editors of "True Confessions" magazine a thing or two about how to truly confess, why confess, what to confess and to whom to confess! Daniel's confession for himself and for Israel, in Daniel chapter 9, was not for human but divine ears, was not published in a magazine but was prayed to the Holy God against whom all sin is committed.

Daniel's prayer was prompted by the reading of Jeremiah's prophecy that Jerusalem would be restored after its destruction by the Babylonians. (vs.1-2) This prospect encouraged him to pray this prayer of personal and national confession in preparation for return and restoration.

Daniel did not begin his life of prayer when the prospects looked good. He was always a man of prayer. His practice of praying three times a day in front of his window opened toward Jerusalem got him thrown into the den of lions. (Daniel 6:10-19) His faith leapt while the lions slept! Now, having read Jeremiah's promising prophecy of God's plan for his beloved Jerusalem, he sets about to petition God.

Frederick A. Tatford said of this prayer, "The prayer is one of the most remarkable in the pages of Holy Writ." ("The Climax of The Ages", London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott) John F. Walvoord wrote, "No other portion of the Bible breathes with more pure devotion or has greater content than this prayer of Daniel." ("Daniel, The Key To Prophetic Revelation", Chicago: Moody Press)

Daniel begins his prayer as all prayer should begin, with great reverence for God.

**I. HIS APPROACH TO GOD.**

"I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes." (v.3)

Daniel's reverent approach to God is seen in:

**A. His Attitude Before God.**

With deepest contrition of soul evidenced by fasting, wearing garments made from rough cloth of sacks, putting ashes on his head – an outward sign of true humility and penitence - he came before God. One cannot approach the Holy of Holies without being made aware of what unholiness is. He speaks of “shame of face” in verses 7 and 8. This is not a creature cowering before its Creator in fear and trepidation but a saint, out of deepest reverence and the highest sense of the awesomeness of the Worthy One, bowing in worship.

We cannot but be moved by his reverential awe of God. His bodily posture and self-abnegation are reflections of his heart attitude as he enters the presence of the holy God. In addition, his reverence is reflected in the manner in which he addresses God:

**B. His Addressing Of God.**

In v.4 he said, “I prayed to the Lord my God.” He repeatedly cries out: “O Lord” in v.4, 7,8,15,16,18 and in verse 19 he prays, “O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act!”

He has a high view of God. Our view of God will determine our view of sin. One with a high view of God abhors sin – is sensitive to sin. A low view of God results in a weak view of sin. Daniel calls God “the Most High” in 7:22. Because of his lofty view of God Daniel is sensitive to the sins that have resulted in God’s judgment upon his beloved people.

I sometimes shudder at the way some Christians irreverently and flippantly approach God. I heard one T.V. pastor begin his prayer, “Hey, Daddy, it’s me comin’ to ya!” That was not intimacy but irreverence! It is no wonder that it is said of some sinners, “there is no fear of God before their eyes.” (Rom. 3:18) Irreverent familiarity with the Holy One and with holy things is ruinous to spirituality.

Furthermore, Daniel’s reverence for God is communicated to us by:

**C. His Use Of The Attributes Of God.**

He appeals to the “Great and awesome God” v.4; he says God is the covenant keeping God, v.4 and speaks of His “mercy” v.4 and also verses 9 and 18; he sees God as “righteous,” v.7,14 & 16; and asks that “Your anger and Your fury” be turned away, in verse 16. Daniel’s prayer reveals that he knows God, not by hearsay, but he has a personal knowledge of Him and an intimate relationship with Him.

The manner in which Daniel begins his intercession is instructive and its intensity is convicting. This sensitive senior saint, this aged prophet who had been so loyal to God is, while pouring out his heart in prayer, conducting a seminar on “How To Pray.” May we learn well from him as we continue to study his prayer.

Let us now move to the heart of his prayer which is his confession of sin. There is no record of a single failure in Daniel’s life. We know that he was a mere man but of all the great Bible characters Daniel appears as the purest. Yet it is remarkable how

completely he includes himself in the sins and failures, the unfaithfulness of the nation of which he is a part. He identifies with and confesses the national sins of the people of God as if they were his own.

## II. **HIS ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SINS.**

"I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession...." (v.4)

The main body of David's prayer is his confession of sin. From his approach to God we have seen that Daniel was a man who knew God. Those who intimately know the Sinless One are extremely sensitive to sin and hasten to confess and forsake it.

### A. **What is Confession?**

What is the meaning of "confession" in this context? For our eternal benefit, here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and far removed from Daniel, it would be profitable for us all to be of the same mind about what the meaning of confession is so that we can understand the solemnity of Daniel's prayer.

The English word "confess" is from the Latin "cōfessiō" and means acknowledgment of sinfulness, regarded as necessary to obtain divine forgiveness. The Greek word for "confess" is "homologoomen" and is from a combination of two Greek words which mean "To say the same thing as another" – in the context of confessing to God the Greek means "to say the same thing about sin that God says." That is, to acknowledge that sin is indeed anti-God, unrighteous and grievous both to God and man.

Confessing is a disclosure of one's sins to God; admission of guilt; a declaration before God that one has sinned. Synonyms for "confession" are: admission, owning up to, revealing, disclosure, telling. Of course, when we confess we are not disclosing, revealing or telling God something about ourselves that He does not already know for His "eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men." (Jer.32:19)

When we confess our sins we are taking responsibility for them and claiming His promised mercy and forgiveness. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (I Jn.1:9)

There are two provisions promised by God mentioned in I John 1:9 which are:

- (1) Forgiveness of the act or actions of sins – "“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins”; and
- (2) Cleansing from the pollution of sin or sins – “and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

However, an aspect of forgiveness and cleansing that is often overlooked, or purposefully ignored, is stated in Proverbs 28:13 "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but who ever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy." Here "confessing" is coupled with "forsaking."

Daniel did not know Latin or Greek but he did know how to confess sin to the Sinless One! Recognizing the exceeding sinfulness of sin against the Holy God of heaven; the

devastation it had wrought in Israel; the judgment of God upon the nation by dispersing the people and the destruction of Jerusalem, he comes before God to confess. He takes his countrymen's place in confession of sin, identifying himself with them, and, as their representative and intercessory priest pours out his confession and intercession. The prayers that move God come from broken hearts and Daniel prays from a broken heart.

### **B. What Daniel Confesses.**

Daniel, in his confession, gets right to the point and deals with the core issue which is sin, both his and his people's. He does not pray as some pray, verbalizing around the edges, circling the culprit of sin like a hunter creeping upon his prey. He humbly yet boldly lays out the evidence of guilt before the Judge of all the earth and throws both himself and his people upon the mercy of the Court of heaven. Let us listen and learn from a true confession:

1. "we have sinned" – v.5
2. "committed iniquity" – v.5
3. "we have done wickedly" – v.5
4. "and rebelled" v.5
5. "departing from Your precepts and Your judgments." v.5
6. "neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets" v.6
7. "unfaithfulness committed against You" v.7
8. "we have sinned against You" v.8
9. "we have rebelled" v.9
10. "We have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God" v.10
11. "all Israel has transgressed Your law" v.11
12. "not obeyed" v.12
13. "not made our prayer before the Lord" v.13
14. "our iniquities" v.13
15. "we have sinned" v.15
16. "we have done wickedly" v.16

He confesses with specificity, naming sins, some repeatedly. He does not pray in generalities but itemizes those sins that have grieved the heart of God. He does not say, "If we have sinned and done this or that." He lists them. He "comes clean." Even in a human court of law a half-hearted confession is no confession. What if the person on trial said, "Well, I sort of shot the man" or, "I half-way robbed the store" or, "I only ran part-way through the red light." Daniel is thorough in his confession for after all, the All-Seeing eye of God has already observed everything that Daniel verbalizes.

Years ago there was a song sung in some churches that contained the following words:

"If I have wounded any soul today,  
If I have caused one soul to go astray;  
If I have walked in my own willful way,  
Dear Lord, forgive."

That is not the type of confessing that Daniel does. He does not say “*if*” – he prays “*we have*”! Confessing sin seems to have become a thing of bygone days of revivalist movements. To say that we have nothing to confess reveals that we are either insensitive to God and/or we are ignorant about what sin is.

**Illust.** David was also a great confessor. Repeatedly in the Psalms David confesses his sins to God. In Psalm 51 we hear him in his heart-broken confession saying: “I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that you are proved right when You speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.”(Ps.51:3-7)

And then there was St. Augustine who wrote what is considered by many as the first Western autobiography ever written, titled: “The Confessions Of St Augustine.” It was written between AD 397 and AD 398 when he was in his early 40s, and he lived long afterwards. The book is considered yet today a Christian classic.

In the book Augustine's sinful youth is revealed. He writes about how much he regrets having led a sinful and immoral life. He shows intense sorrow for his sins and discusses his regrets for believing in astrology, his choice of bad companions, which led him to commit thievery and sins too numerous to mention here. It also documents his conversion to Christ.

The book reveals the sensitivity of Augustine to sin and challenges every child of God to think seriously about God and the wedge that sin drives between a loving God and a sinning creature. After a long litany of sins he recalls committing, he writes:

“While my memory recalls these things, is not my soul affrightened at them? I will love Thee, O Lord, and thank Thee, and confess unto Thy name: because Thou hast forgiven me these so great and heinous deeds of mine. To Thy grace I ascribe it, and to Thy mercy, that Thou has melted away my sins as they were ice.”

As with Daniel so with David, St. Augustine and with all who value unbroken fellowship with The Father. Sensitivity to sin is always an indication of the closeness of one's walk with God. The more sensitive one is, the more detailed the confessions will be.

The greatly confessed are the greatly blessed! Great confessors are greatly used by God. That is not to say that we should sin, then confess so that we can be blessed or used by God. What it does mean is that those who confess sin humble themselves before God in order to confess. Jesus said “whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 14:11)

His confessions now being ended, we come to that part of his praying where he turns to supplicating God on behalf of the nation in general and Jerusalem in particular. He uses the word “supplications” two times, once in verse 17 and once in verse 18 saying, “hear

the prayer of Your servant, and his *supplications*” (v.17) and “we do not present our *supplications* before You because of our righteous deeds.” (v.18)

“Prayer” is a general term for all converse with God. “Supplications” are particular. Supplication is that aspect of praying by which something is asked for with intensity of desire. To “supplicate” is an appeal for mercy and compassion, a petition for something. Daniel’s fervency in his praying seems to increase when he comes to supplicating God.

### III. HIS APPEAL FOR MERCY.

“We do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies.” (v.18)

He casts himself and his nation upon the mercies of God, basing his appeal upon:

- (1) his confession of sin;
- (2) on the character of God: “according to all Your righteousness” (v.16) and “because of Your great mercies” (v.18); and
- (3) on the condition of the city of Jerusalem and God’s people: “for Your city and Your people.” (v.19)

Notice now, the nature of his appeal:

#### A. He Appeals For God’s Own Interests.

He says, “O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see...” (v.18) Of course this is figurative language, for God does certainly see all, but Daniel uses this terminology in prefacing his appeal for God to remember that His, that is God’s, interests are at stake. He says:

“Your city Jerusalem” – v.16

“Your holy mountain” – v.16

“Your people” – v.16

“Your sanctuary” – v.17

“Your name” – v.18

“Your city and Your people are called by Your name.” – v.19

He teaches us a lesson about priorities in prayer. To really evaluate our prayer life, we need only ask one question: “How much would I pray if I had no personal needs?”

#### B. He Appeals With Intensity.

The intensity of Daniel’s prayer can be seen in how he addresses God: He says in v.17 “Now therefore, our God”; in v.18 he says, “O my God”; then in v.19 “O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen. “

This is an “effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man....” (James 5:16) Did you ever cry out to God with fervency and intensity in confession, in supplication, yes, even in praise? There are times and situations which call for the saint of God to “gush forth” the pent up petitions with emotion. Scripture uses the phrase “Pour out” in reference to such praying. Examples are:



**Psalm 62:8** - "Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him."

**Psalm 142:2** – "I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare before Him my trouble."

**Lamentations 2:19** - " Arise, cry out in the night, At the beginning of the watches; Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord."

Daniel "poured out" his heart. Sometimes I have wondered if God waits to see if we really put our hearts into our prayers before He moves in answer to them. Do we really mean business when we pray or is prayer just a ritual, a rote exercise in which we are half-heartedly engaged?

### C. He Appeals Insistently.

Daniel wants to make sure that he has God's attention and that God is hearing. He repeatedly says:

- "hear the prayer of Your servant" – v.17;
- "incline Your ear and hear" – v. 18;
- "O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive!" – v.19
- "O Lord, listen and act!" – v.19

This is praying from a burdened heart; this is prayer issuing up from the deep recesses of emotional involvement with God and God's cause. Some persons are emotional about everything. Some are unalterably stoic. Daniel was neither. He was a very balanced believer not given to flights of emotional outbursts. See him in Daniel chapter 6 in the lions' den, calm, cool and collected. No, he was properly exercised at the right time about the right cause.

Jesus was encouraging insistence and persistence in prayer when He said, "Ask", "seek", "knock" (Matt.7:7) – He was describing three different types of praying. Sometimes we confidently ask; sometimes earnestly seek and sometimes fervently knock. Daniel was fervently knocking in this prayer – praying with importunity.

## IV. HIS ANSWER CAME SWIFTLY.

Did God hear and answer Daniel? Yes! What a unique reply Daniel received to his prayer:

"Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God, yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved...." (9:20-23)

Nothing touches the heart of God in heaven like prayers from a broken heart on earth. The feeling and fervor of Daniel's prayer is unmistakable. His intercession was not groomed for human ears. It gushed out volcano-like in fervency; hurricane-like in intensity; earthquake-like in its reverberations and God responded! John F. Walvoord comments: "If prayer to God can be called persuasive, Daniel's prayer certainly merits this description!"

**A. Gabriel Confirmed God's Purposes.**

Daniel's praying was interrupted by an angel! God sent the angel Gabriel to tell Daniel what His plans for the future of Israel and Jerusalem were. Chapter 10 is about what God is going to do. Israel will be restored, Jerusalem will be rebuilt and the people will be re-gathered.

**B. Gabriel Comforted God's Prophet.**

A most tender relationship between God and Daniel is seen in the words "greatly beloved." Three times this phrase is used in relation to Daniel:

1. [Daniel 9:23](#)

"I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved."

2. [Daniel 10:11](#)

"And he said to me, "O Daniel, man greatly beloved."

3. [Daniel 10:19](#)

"And he said, "O man greatly beloved, fear not! Peace be to you; be strong, yes, be strong!" So when he spoke to me I was strengthened, and said, "Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me."

It is unlikely that we will ever have an angel tap us on the shoulder and say, "Your prayer Has been heard, you are greatly beloved." However, we have it in writing that we are greatly beloved! We are "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph.1:6), consequently, "Beloved, now we are children of God." (I John 3:2)

Daniel: What a man! What a prophet! What a pray-er! What a prayer! What a model for us in his life, his loyalty and leadership for God.

**CONCLUSION**

John Bunyan wrote, "Prayer is a sincere, sensible pouring out of the heart or soul to God, according to the will of God with submission to God's will." A better model than Daniel, for such praying, cannot be found in scripture, apart from our Savior.

How is your prayer life? Prayer is the truest indicator of the state of one's spiritual health. Prayer is the stethoscope that reveals the heart beat of the soul. Prayer is the thermometer that registers the fever of our passion for the Lord. Prayer is the X-ray that reveals the inner condition of our soul.

*"Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray,  
This is my heart-cry, day unto day;  
I long to know Thy will and Thy way,  
Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray."*

- Albert S. Reitz

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