

A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

13

TO SEEK BY PRAYER

*“And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:
And I prayed unto the LORD my God.”*

Daniel 9:3-4a

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Daniel 9:3

Daniel chapter 9 begins *“In the first year of Darius.”* That dates his prayer and vision to about 539 B.C. This was about “sixty-seven years after Daniel’s Transportation in the summer of 605 B.C. . . . a bit less than fifty years from the final destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. this explains Daniel’s interest in Jerusalem. He wondered if the time was up.” (Wycliffe. P. 792) He was a student of the Word of God. He was very familiar with the writings of the prophet Jeremiah who prophesied that the captivity of the people of God would be 70 years. *“And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.”* (Jeremiah 25:11) The writer of II Chronicles assumes the validity of this prophesy. *“And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had*

enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.” (II Chronicles 36:20-21)

The thought that God was about to enter again into the lives of His people, moved Daniel’s heart in a profound way. He was so overcome by his desire and the revelation that he had discovered in the Scriptures that he is driven to his knees in penitential prayer. It moved him so much that he gave himself to prayer and fasting in sackcloth and ashes. He had not sinned as the people had sinned. Yet, he felt the shame of Israel’s sin so acutely that he prayed and confessed the sins of Judah as if they were his own. God said that this man was, *“Greatly beloved.”* (Vs. 23) It is notable that this intercessory prayer of Daniel was brought about by Daniel’s study of the Word of God. God spoke to Daniel through his Bible study. He read first and became convinced of his own sinfulness. (Vs. 5) He was then convinced of the goodness of God to keep His promises. *“The Lord is righteous in all his doings. O Lord our God, That hast brought thy people fourth out of Egypt with a mighty*

hand.” (Vs. 14-15) Reading the Bible should prompt our hearts to worship and praise God more. It should cause us to confess our sins and be more obedient. God speaks to our hearts when we read His Word. As a word of personal testimony, your writer was called to preach while reading the Word of God.

he was called to the mission field while reading His Word. The Scriptures are a great encouragement in times of distress. Daniel’s prayer was a result of his Bible reading.

Daniel next begins to confess the sins of his people. He begins this passage in verse 5 with a general confession of sin. *“We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments”* He lists several of the many things that brought on Judah’s condemnation. He says in verse 6 that they did not obey the voice of the prophets of God that had preached in the name of God. The people had transgressed the laws of God. (Vs. 11) Even after God’s judgments that had fallen upon them, they had not repented. He sums up his confession at the

end of verse 15. *“At this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly.”* Daniel had learned a lesson that we should pay attention to. God takes note of our sin. He will not allow us to continue in our sinful condition. He will bring chastisement to us if we persist and fail to repent of our sin. *“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth”* (Hebrews 12:6) However, He longs for us to confess our sin and repent of it and return to a close relationship with Him. (See I John 1:9)

Beginning in verse 16 Daniel begins to beg God to forgive the people of Judah. *“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.”* (Vs. 16)

Daniel finished his prayer with a threefold request of God. *“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.”*

(Vs. 19) His prayer was for God to “hear” his prayer. That is, please “listen to what I have to say”. Daniel was eager that God should pay attention to his request and take seriously their repentance. Next, he asks God to forgive their sin. He realized just how much grace this would require because of the enormity of their iniquity. Finally, he implores God to act on their behalf. If they were to go back to their home in Israel they would need to be rightly related to the Father. He bases his request upon the honor of God. He wanted to keep a good clear testimony before the peoples around them and to do it for His own sake.

Daniel’s prayer was, first of all persistent; he had been waiting for 70 years. He was determined in his prayer. *“I set my face unto the Lord.”* (Vs.3) This expression denotes the fixedness of his thoughts, the firmness of his faith, and the fervor of his devout affections. Daniel’s prayer was important enough that he prayed with fasting, in sack cloth and ashes. It was offered in Humility with the confessing sins. It was prayer with a submissive spirit. (Vs.

14) Daniel was broken hearted over the condition of his people. He prayed that he might see change in the people. He prayed long and with great emotion. The emotion sprang from the condition of his people. Our challenge is are we broken hearted about the condition of people that we know and love? Are we willing to pray until we see God do great things? We have a nation to pray for. We want to see God do great things in our midst. Do we expect miracles from God or are we satisfied with just coming to church? Daniel chapter 9 is a wonderful example of intercessory prayer. We should be challenged to move forward in this endeavor.

The second half of chapter 9 was a thrilling prophecy not only for the people of Daniel's day but also for us today. He we see the moving of God in love and grace till the end of the age. The vision grew out of Daniel's willingness to pray for his people. *"At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision."* (Vs. 23)

Notes
