

Observations from Daniel's Prayer

Dan. 9:1-5

Introduction:

1. Although Daniel was Jewish he had a powerful influence in the kingdom of the Chaldeans.
2. He had been taken captive when the Babylonians captured Jerusalem, but by God's power he had risen to a place of significance among his captures.
3. Now, he anticipates their release and so prays to God.
4. There are four observations that I would like to make with you about prayer, based upon what we can learn from this text.

Discussion:

- I. Prayer arises from the promises of God revealed in His word (v. 2).
 - A. There are two passages in the book of Jeremiah that identify the length of the captivity: Jer. 25:11-13 and 29:10-14.
 1. Daniel recognized that God was in control of the affairs of men.
 2. He recognized that God was not limited by time and had therefore revealed what would take place and when.
 3. Daniel's prayer arose out of His faith in God's promise.
 - B. Do you believe that God is in control of the affairs of men and that He has revealed what will take place in the future?
 1. Daniel's prayer arose out of his theological perceptions of His God.
 2. He believed in God. He believed in a God who had revealed himself in the writings of Jeremiah.
 3. Such beliefs affected Daniel's behavior and that is why he prayed.
 - C. Scripture speaks of the coming of Jesus (2 Thess. 1:7-10).
 1. He will be glorified in His saints (v. 10).
 2. It will be a time of retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus (v. 8).
 3. It led Paul to pray (2 Thess. 1:11-12).
 - D. Do you know what God has revealed in His word? Are your prayers arising from the promises of God? I fear that most prayers arise from our own desires rather than from the desires of God. Have we missed the point of what it means to pray "according to the will of God" (1 Jn. 5:14-15)? How can we pray "according to the will of God" if we do not know what the will of God is?
 - E. Daniel was praying for the will of God to be done. He found it in Scripture.
- II. Prayer recognizes unworthiness (vs. 3-6).
 - A. Daniel's prayer began with a recognition of God's greatness and His awesomeness.
 1. This was acknowledged in light of His covenant and lovingkindness.
 2. This was for those who love Him and keep His commandments.

- B. But Daniel confesses, “We have sinned” (v. 5).
 - 1. Acted wickedly.
 - 2. Rebelled.
 - 3. Turned aside from commandments and ordinances.
 - 4. Not listened to the prophets.
 - 5. They had broken their covenant relationship with God. This is what had led to their captivity (Deut. 28:1-14, 64-68). The only way back was to reverse that course through repentance.
- C. This is why he seeks the Lord “with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.”
 - 1. These were all signs of penitence (cf. Jonah 3:5-9; Isa. 58).
 - 2. In light of their unworthiness it was appropriate to humble themselves in this way.
 - 3. Some today may look at prayer and fasting as acts of special piety toward God, as though they are commending themselves to God in special acts of devotion. Some may fast today thinking that in such acts they will get God’s attention. But in this context they are reflections of intense awareness of sin and humility associated with begging for forgiveness.
- D. In these actions Daniel followed the demands set by Lev. 26:40-45 and 1 Kings 8:46-53.
 - 1. They had been brought into the land of their enemies because of their disobedience.
 - 2. Yet God would be faithful to His covenant.
- E. Intense prayers rise from unworthy hearts overwhelmed with grief for their sin.
 - 1. Such sorrow brings people to worship.
 - 2. We are always working to get people to come to worship. Sorrow for sin brings people to worship. (This brings us to the next observation.)

III. Prayer recognizes the compassion of the Lord (v. 18-19).

- A. Without the compassion of the Lord there is no relief from the sorrow of sin.
- B. We do not merit God’s forgiveness. There is nothing that we have done to incline Him to forgive us. It is His unmerited kindness, His gracious forgiveness, His greatness that leads us to pray for forgiveness.
- C. “He who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Heb. 11:6).
- D. Sin is often followed by hiding (ex. Gen. 3:10), by withdrawing from God. Seeing His compassion brings us out of hiding. It brings us out of the darkness of seclusion.
- E. Daniel prayed because He recognized the compassion of the Lord. There is no fear of condemnation for those who recognize the compassion of God. They can come boldly before His throne. NOT because they are worthy, but because of their trust in a God who forgives.

IV. Prayer calls upon God to do what He has promised (v. 2).

- A. Daniel observed in the books that God had promised an end to the exile after 70 years.
- B. He called on God to fulfill that promise.

- C. Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, prayed like Daniel.
 - 1. Zacharias prayed in the temple (Lk. 1:13) while the people prayed outside (v. 10). The text says he and Elizabeth had no child. Many of us would perhaps have been praying for a child.
 - 2. Zacharias prayed for the accomplishment of the purpose of God (Lk. 1:67-79).
 - a. God granted him a son who would act in the accomplishment of that purpose.
 - b. Notice his reflection on the promise (70).
 - c. Notice his reflection on the tender mercy of God (78).
 - d. Notice the emphasis on God's covenant (72).
 - e. John's message was a message of repentance (1:16-17).
- D. God responded to Daniel's prayer by dispatching an angel to reveal to Daniel what would take place as God fulfilled His promise. God responded to Zacharias by dispatching the same angel, Gabriel, with the message of the coming of John to prepare the way for the Messiah (Lk. 1:19).

Conclusion:

- 1. Are you praying for God to accomplish what He has promised?
- 2. Are you asking recognizing your unworthiness?
- 3. Are you asking because of the compassion of God?
- 4. Are you praying for the accomplishment of God's purpose because His purpose is your purpose too?