

Introduction:

1. I worry that some of God's people don't pray because they don't think it does any good. They think it is a waste of time and that nothing is really changed by prayer—especially in times of crisis.
  - a. Would you pray more if you thought something good would happen as a result? Would you begin to pray seriously if you thought it could really make a difference?
  - b. James said, "The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:17). Prayer should be more than custom; it is communication with God that makes a difference
2. Prayer ought to be—and is intended by God to be—effective, worthwhile, profitable and successful. Are your prayers that way? Let's see a man whose prayers were like that, Daniel 9:1-19.
  - a. Daniel prayed this way because of the critical situation he and his people were in. Daniel had been a captive in Babylon for almost 70 years. He was among the first taken captive into Babylon in 605, Daniel 1:1, 6. Daniel was very old when this prayer was made. He was probably about 16 when taken into captivity. When we find him in chapter nine, Daniel is in his eighties.
  - d. When Daniel made his prayer, Babylon had fallen and the Medo-Persians were in power.
3. The four things found in Daniel's prayer make this prayer dramatic and powerful.

The Lesson:**I. Effective prayer is based on the knowledge of God's will.**

- A. Daniel prayed for Israel. He did so on the basis of what God had revealed, Daniel 9:2.
  1. Daniel prayed earnestly for a special blessing because he knew from Jeremiah's prophecies that God had a special purpose for Israel, Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10. Though Jeremiah had been dead for a number of years, his words of hope had been carefully preserved and studied by the Jews.
  2. Even though Daniel was a great prophet, he was still a student of the scriptures. He did not find it insulting or demeaning to have to rely on another prophet's words. If Daniel found it necessary to study the scriptures, how much more should we find it necessary?
  3. The fact that God had promised to restore Israel to the land did not make Daniel's prayer unnecessary. If anything, it made it more necessary. God's promises are not intended to make prayer unnecessary. Rather, His promises should stimulate and provoke prayer. Look at Jeremiah 29:10-14. The prayers of the people were tied in to the promises of God.
  4. The people had lived as captive slaves for 70 years. They needed deliverance and God promised deliverance. But this did not take away their need to pray. God knows what we need even before we ask Him, Matthew 6:8. Yet, the Lord does not discourage us from asking. He, in fact, does the opposite. He requires that we ask, Matthew 6:9-13; 7:7-11.
  5. What if Daniel and others had not prayed? Would the captivity have been longer than 70 years? Maybe it was 70 years because God knew it would take that long for the people to come to true repentance and trust in Him and to pray for deliverance, Daniel 9:13.
- B. The more we know about God's will, the more effective our prayers will be, 1 John 5:14-15.
  1. Is it possible that we have such a weak prayer life because we know so little of God's will?
  2. Of ourselves, we don't even know what we should pray as we ought, Romans 8:26.
  3. In fact, we need to be taught how to pray. We are in need, like those in Luke 11:1.
  4. This is just one more reason for Bible study. The more we know about what God has said to us, the more effective our prayers will be.

**II. Worthwhile prayer is stirred by the character of God.**

- A. Daniel says, "I set my face toward the Lord God," Daniel 9:3.
  1. Throughout his prayer, Daniel thinks on God's greatness, Daniel 9:4, 7, 9, 14.
  2. Daniel has great confidence in the unchanging faithfulness of God.
  3. While the nation's sins were depressing in Daniel's mind, the mercy of God lifted him up.
  4. The transgressions of Israel had produced terrible judgments, but the righteousness of God in keeping His promises was a ray of hope to Daniel and the people.
  5. Daniel knows that the hope of his people is in the character, attributes and promises of God. That's why he appeals to God for God's own sake, Daniel 9:17-19. It may be the

case in verse 17 that Daniel has the Messiah in mind. He knows that God has a great plan to send the Savior into the world. For the sake of that plan, God must act!

6. "For Your own sake" carries the idea that this must be done for the accomplishment of God's own counsel, the performance of His promise, and the manifestation of His own glory. God is always faithful and true to His word. Daniel appeals to God on that basis.
- B. What a blessing to us that God is what God is! Hear the words of another prophet, Jonah 4:2.
1. The fact that we have failed God so miserably, that we have committed so many transgressions, should not deter us from going to God in prayer.
  2. It is true, that we are totally unworthy. But God is a God of mercy, a God who restores, the great and awesome God who forgives sinners when they repent, Daniel 9:18. We don't ask God to forgive us because we are so good, but because He is so good.
  3. The more you know about the character and attributes of God, the more worthwhile your prayers will be. That is another reason to study the Bible and learn of God.

## II. Profitable prayer empties man of himself.

- A. The more we pray, the more we ought to give up our own self-importance, self-confidence, self-righteousness and self-seeking. Daniel boasted of nothing in himself as he emptied himself before God, Daniel 9:4-7. It was not just a matter of "we have sinned," Daniel 9:20.
1. Every sin that Daniel could find in his memory he lay before God and confessed with genuine sorrow. The failure to hear God's word and obey His voice, the neglect of plain commandments, and the disregard of God's prophets—all was confessed in a spirit of humility with a contrite heart.
  2. Nothing was held back. There was no comparison with Gentile nations who might have been worse than Israel. The confession was, "We have sinned. I have sinned."
  3. Daniel paints a picture of shame and disgrace, Daniel 9:8.
- B. God hears such prayers as these, Psalms 51:17.
1. God is not looking for eloquence in our prayers. We can never impress God with flowery, extravagant words and articulate speech. We may never be able to express ourselves with the clarity that Daniel had in his prayer, but that should not deter us.
  2. God accepts the prayer of the humble. The man who comes to God with nothing, who is empty and desperate—that man is accepted with God, Luke 18:13-14.
  3. The more we know about God and His will, the more we will see our own shortcomings. This is one more reason to study the Bible and know our own state.

## III. Successful prayer requires earnest pleading.

- A. Daniel was an important man in the courts of Chaldea, Daniel 6:1-2. Yet, Daniel's hope was not in gaining the favor of Darius or Cyrus. His hope and dependence were upon God, Daniel 9:15-19. These are not the casual words of careless prayer. This is fervent prayer!
1. Daniel makes every possible argument as to why Israel ought to be restored.
  2. Daniel knew that the dilemma and disaster that had come upon Israel was because of their own transgressions.
  3. He also knew that the remedy was in God alone. Call it begging, pleading, beseeching—whatever you want. Daniel put every bit of his soul into this prayer, holding nothing back!
  4. Why such a fervent appeal to God? Because God was the only hope for Israel. Ezekiel the prophet had described the awful condition of the captive nation as though the people were dead and their bones lay bleached in the sun, Ezekiel 37:1-5ff. Who could give life to these dry bones? Only God. Daniel and Israel were dependent upon God.
- B. God heard Daniel, even as He hears such prayers today, James 5:17. Maybe if we knew how much we needed God, we would pray with more fervency. The more we study the scriptures, the more we see our need for God.

### Conclusion:

1. God heard Daniel's prayer, Daniel 9:2-23. Compare this with Isaiah 65:24 and Daniel 10:12. God is eager to hear our prayers. God told Daniel that Jerusalem would be rebuilt, and the Messiah would come. By implication, this meant Israel would be restored to Jerusalem, and indeed they were. The plan of God—for Christ's sake and for ours—was carried out and came to fruition.
2. Our God is the God of Daniel. Is our prayer the prayer of Daniel? Let us learn and pray!