

The Lord's Message: God Answers Prayers

Date: September 1, 2024

Where: Tilghman Methodist Church

Scripture Reference: Daniel 9

The knowledge that most people have of the Book of Daniel is of Daniel being put into the lions' den and God shutting the mouths of the lions. Why was Daniel put into the lions' den? Prayer. Daniel prayed three times a day. This morning, we are going to look at Daniel 9 for the example of how we are to pray.

Let us pray.

In verse 2, we find that Daniel is reading the scriptures from the Book of Jeremiah. He is reading that the Israelite's exile was to last for seventy years. This is found in **Jeremiah 25:11-12** and in **Jeremiah 29:10**. We know that, at this point, Babylon has been conquered by the Medo-Persian empire. In verse 1, Darius the Mede is ruling Babylon. Most theologians believe that Israel is about three years from their exile ending. Daniel must have this in mind also. History tells us that the Israelite's exile ended in 538 BC, when Cyrus the Great gave permission for the Jews to return to their homeland. Of course, God had prophesied this through his prophet Isaiah, **Isaiah 44:28-45:4**.

Looking at verse 3, we see three actions that Daniel uses to prepare himself for prayer. First, "I turned to the Lord God" Daniel set time away from his busy day to pray to God. You need to remember that Daniel was in the government of first Babylon and then the Medo Persians. He would have been a very busy man. Do we take time in our busy day to pray to God?

Second, he "fasted." He made sure that nothing got in the way of his worship of God. If he had cell phones, he would have turned them off. If there were a TV or other electronic media, he would have turned them off as well. He would have had no time for Facebook or other social media.

Third, he put on "sack cloth and ashes." A person wore sackcloth and ashes as a sign of humility. When we come before God, we should humble ourselves before God. God is the One that has made us. Without God we would not exist. God is the one that is in charge of our lives. We should humble ourselves before God. The great theologian John Walvoord says this about Daniel preparing himself for prayer. He "left nothing undone that might possibly make his prayer more effective or more persuasive."

Now, let us look at the structure of Daniel's prayer. Daniel begins the prayer with acknowledging how awesome and great God is. In **Luke 11:1-4**, the disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray. Jesus teaches them the Lord's Prayer. Anyone remember how the prayer begins? "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name". Daniel starts off with something very similar, "O Lord, the great and awesome God." We should begin our prayer with acknowledging the greatness and awesomeness of God. This brings glory of God. It also puts us in the right frame of mind as to whom we are directing our prayers. When I begin my prayers this way, I have an image of God sitting on a glorious throne with angels and cherubim surrounding the throne. Sometimes I linger in that moment. Just taking it in, because one day, I know that the reality of being in the presence of God will surpass anything I could ever dream.

Next Daniel reminds God of the covenant that God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that God would bless all who love Him and obey His commandments with His presence forever. Jesus tells us in **John 14:15-21**.

Daniel now makes a confession of sins from verse 5 to verse 15. We should confess our sins to God daily, sometimes throughout the day. When we come to prayer, we can not come into the holy presence of God without first confessing our sins and receiving forgiveness of those sins. Our prayers are more effective when we do this. God cannot be around sin. Sin becomes a barrier between us and God. We need to confess those sins and be forgiven of those sins before we can ask God to hear our supplication. Charles Spurgeon puts it this way, "Oh! That our prayers could get beyond praying, till they got to agonizing." Is your prayer agonizing in confessing sins?

In verses 16-19, Daniel asks God to forgive him, Jerusalem, and the Israelite people of their sin. He tells them God was right in exiling Israel. Daniel appeals to God's mercy to end the exile at the appointed time. He is not making this request because of his goodness but because of God's goodness, love, and mercy. This is what it means to pray in Jesus Name. We pray not because we are good, but because Jesus gave His life on the cross for each one of us. We deserved death, but Jesus paid our debt. That is why we are forgiven.

Now, I know the world is very skeptical that prayer works. Sometimes the church is skeptical about how prayer works. I remember one of my first appointments, I was appointed to a church that was struggling financially. They were struggling so much that the treasurer would come to me and tell me that they did not have enough money in the bank to pay me. They would need another collection on Sunday. Now this church had a roof that was well past the years that it should have been replaced. They had started a fund, but they had only collected a very small amount, considering what the cost was to replace the roof, and they had been ten years collecting that. I started to pray to God, what are we going to do about the roof. God answered my prayer and told me what I needed to do. I needed to bring this before Him. At the monthly church council meeting, I brought in dozens of shingles that I had been collecting each time the wind blew and more shingles came off the roof. I placed the shingles before the church council and asked them what we should do. Their reply, we have a fund. I replied that I know One who has a greater fund and has this been brought to His attention. Then I asked them how were they to bring this to God's attention? I told them, "Be at church on Sunday." God told me on Sunday to take the shingles and place them on the altar. Then call up the chair of the church council, the treasurer, the chair of the trustees and the finance. Together we all prayed, seeking the Lord to provide us with the resources to replace the shingles on the roof. Funds started coming in. Some well-financed people sent us money. It was reported in the local paper and more money started coming in. An investment group called me up to give me money. In less than six months, we had almost all we needed to put on the new roof. The Trustees got to work on bids. One company came in under everyone else. God told me that was the company. Because of this company, we had an excess of \$5000 to replace the roof. This would become very important, because we did not figure into the cost of replacing a good part of steeple that was rotten, which came to \$5000. In less than 6 months, we had a new roof and a repaired steeple for the church that would last for a long time. God had answered our prayer and worked a miracle. You would think that if this church had another large project that they would turn to God. It was several years later that the boiler went up. It was installed a long time ago and required a complete replacement. It was another costly project. I had gone on to another appointment and I was told by a friend at the church that at the first church council meeting, the leadership agreed to start a boiler fund.

Now, we may never get an answer to prayer, or the answer may come years from now, but every so often, we get an answer right away. Here, God answers Daniel's prayer right away. In verses 20-21, God sends the angel Gabriel. Just a side point that I learned the other day, the name of God's angels in the Bible always ends with the letters "el." El means in Hebrew, "God." So, when you see an angel with the last two letters in its name, you know that this angel is from God.

In **John 14:13-14**, Jesus tells us that what we ask in Jesus' name, then Jesus will fulfill that prayer. Now, this does not mean that we ask Jesus for a new car, or a new house or some other possession. When our mind is in tune with God, then our prayer request lines up with God's will and God will fulfill it. In verses 22-23, this is why Daniel's prayer was answered right away.

In verse 24, Daniel is told that the exile will end just as Jeremiah and Isaiah had predicted.

Now verses 25-27, tell of future events at the end times. Because Daniel is in tune with God, God not only provides the answer to Daniel's prayer that Israel will return from exile back to Palestine, but also what is going to happen to the Israelites and Jerusalem during the time of Jesus.

When you see the word, "Anointed One" this refers to Messiah, which refers to Jesus. The number seven sevens, and sixty-two has been calculated by Scotland Yard's Sir Robert Anderson to be 483 years. From the time, that Cyrus decrees that the Israelite should return and rebuild the temple to when Jesus rides in triumphally to Jerusalem on a donkey in 483 years. The exact day is calculated to be April 6, 32 AD.

Of course, at this time, the city is under Roman rule. This is the cause of trouble, "but in time of trouble." It also says about "streets with a trench." We take for granted about having drainage ditches on the side of the road. The Romans were the first civilization to consistently have drainage ditches alongside the road.

In verse 26, it says that the "Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing." Less than a week after Jesus makes in triumphant ride into Jerusalem, He is nailed to a cross and dies. "The people of the ruler will come and destroy the city and the sanctuary." In 70 AD, Rome destroyed Jerusalem including the temple and left not one stone on top of another. "The end will come like a flood." The Romans literally flood into Jerusalem.

If you remember, I told you that a prophecy can represent two events in time. This is known as the Law of Double Reference. Here we have a Law of Double Reference. We start with Rome and move to the Antichrist. The ruler is Rome and the Antichrist. In the end times, the Antichrist makes a peace covenant with the Jews that still will not believe in Jesus as the Messiah. This covenant is to be for seven years, but the Antichrist will break that covenant after three and a half years. He will put an end to worship of God, “put an end to sacrifice and offering.” He will set up the idol of Satan, “the abomination that causes desolation.” This will last until God has decreed his time on earth is done, “until the end that is decreed is poured out on him. Then he will be sent into the everlasting fires of hell.

Daniel was told all of this by the angel of God, Gabriel, because of how in tune his prayers were with the will of God. If we want our prayers to be effective, then we need to follow Daniel’s example.

Prayer is one of the keys for us to grow together in faith. Amen.