Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Elements of True Prayer, Part 3
Scripture: Daniel 9:16-19
Code: 27-23

In preparation for the Lord's table tonight, I want us to go back to Daniel chapter 9. For the last two weeks, we've been looking at the first 19 verses of Daniel chapter 9, and I want us to finish that look this evening, briefly, and then to share in the Lord's table.

Daniel chapter 9 presents to us a great insight into prayer. First 19 verses are a prayer prayed by Daniel to the Lord on behalf of the people he loved, the people of Israel. As we've been learning in the last couple of Sunday nights as we've been examining this wonderful prayer, prayer has many facets, many facets. I've been trying to point out to you, through the years and the months recently in which we've studied the Lord's Prayer in Matthew chapter 6, that prayer is primarily communion with God. It's not really so much designed for us to get things, as it is to get in on things; that is to identify ourselves with the Lord and with His causes and His purposes.

To illustrate that, let me just tell you a little story. One day, the five-year-old son of D. L. Moody, the great evangelist, came into Mr. Moody's study. And his father was there, very busy with his books and his Bible, and he was writing and didn't want any interruptions. The little fellow just stood beside him and didn't say a word. Not a sound. And, finally, the distraction was more than Mr. Moody could bear, and, gruffly, he said, "Well, what do you want?" "Nothing, Daddy," said his son, "I just wanted to be where you are." And I think that may be what prayer is, first and foremost. It isn't that you necessarily want anything. It's just that you'd like to be where He is.

Prayer is entering into His presence. Prayer is companionship with God. Prayer is desiring to identify with God's person, God's plan, God's power, and God's purpose. We've been looking at this great prayer of Daniel. He knows what the plan is. It was revealed to him in the Book of Jeremiah as he read. He knows what God is preparing to do. He knows the situation, and it isn't that he's asking for something beyond that. It's just that he wants to identify with God and what God has already promised to do. He just wants to be where God is, and be a part of God's plan.

And on behalf of the people of Israel, he intercedes, and, in effect, the one request in the entire 19 verses appears in verse 19; and it's really simple. "O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hearken and do!" And the main issue is, "Do it, Lord. You've already said You were going to do it. You've already planned to do it. You revealed in Your Word You're going to do it. And I just want to come along to say, 'Do it!' I just want to identify with that. And, Lord, if it means forgiving Your people, then do that, and bring to pass the conclusion of their chastening."

Now, in this wonderful prayer, there are 18 verses before he gets to his petition. Eighteen verses of heart preparation. Eighteen verses of intercession on the part of Daniel for his people. And I have pointed out to you that there are eight elements that mark genuine intercessory prayer. There are eight elements that mark genuine intercessory prayer. We see these eight as we flow this wonderful prayer. It becomes a model for us; in fact, one of the very best in all of the Old Testament. Let me remind you of what we've already learned and go through the first few of these principles that we have examined in the past.

Number one, prayer is generated by the Word of God. Verse 2 tells us that while he was reading the Book of Jeremiah, he was prone to pray. Our prayer life proceeds from the intensity of our study of the Word of God. As we hear God tell us His plans, we respond. We might say then that the first principle, prayer is generated by the Word of God, is simply that we seek to know God's plan. That's where it begins, and we get into the Word to find out what God is going to do, so we can pray intelligently.

Secondly, we said that prayer is grounded in the will of God. It is generated out of the Word of God, and it is grounded in the will of God. We seek not only to know God's plan, but to see it fulfilled. We're not trying to change God's mind. We're trying to identify with what He already wants to do, which is best.

Thirdly, we've learned that prayer is characterized by fervency. Prayer is a passionate involvement in the matters that concern the heart of God. Prayer not only seeks to know God's plan, not only seeks to see God's plan fulfilled, but it seeks to see God's plan fulfilled at once. There's an earnestness. There's a passion involved.

Fourthly, then, we also saw that true intercessory prayer, genuine prayer is marked by self-denial. It is realized in self-denial. We see the fervency in verse 3, and we see the self-denial in verse 4, where he says, "I prayed unto the Lord my God and made my confession." He doesn't come and say, "You need to do this for me, because I have a claim on You." He doesn't come and say, "I have a right to demand this out of You, God." He comes and says, "I'm a sinner," and, in effect, he says, "I don't have a right to demand anything." Prayer is at the very beginning, a recognition of our own unworthiness and a sense of self-denial. And so prayer seeks to, not only know God's will, not only to see it fulfilled, not only to see it fulfilled at once; but to see it fulfilled no matter what that costs me.

And then fifthly, we said that true intercessory prayer is identified with God's people. It's not selfish. I mean if it's just denied itself, it won't be selfish. It won't be grasping and possessive for it's own goals. And we see, as we looked at verses 5 down through 14, how many times he says "we" and "our" and "us" and "all Israel." And again and again he is saying, "I want to encompass all the people of God, all of us. This is our problem. Minister to us." The essence of true intercessory prayer is that it's bigger

than any individual; that when we really pray, self has been set aside, and we are lost in the needs of others. We reminded you of 1 Samuel 12:23, which says, “God forbid that I should sin in ceasing to pray for You.”

So we might say that true intercessory prayer not only seeks to know God’s plan, not only seeks to see it fulfilled, not only seeks to see it fulfilled at once, not only seeks to see it fulfilled at once no matter what it costs me; but seeks to see it fulfilled for the sake of others, for the sake of others. It isn’t, “Lord, please do this because I’d like to have it so.” It’s, “Please do this because Your people would be blessed.”

And then sixthly, and where we stopped last time, true intercessory prayer is strengthened in confession. It is strengthened in confession. Look at verse 30, or rather 3, I’m sorry. Verse 3, and then 20. Verse 3, “I set my face to the Lord to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes. And prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession.” Verse 20, “And while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sins of my people, Israel.”

Now, throughout the whole thing, there is a sense of confession. Confession is to say the same thing that God is saying about your sin, to agree with God that your sin is your sin. As Dan was praying tonight, he acknowledged before the Lord his sin and the sins of his people. He was really saying, “Lord, we thank You that You’ve already forgiven us, but we confess these things,” and that’s essential in true prayer. True prayer enters into the presence of God with a sense of God’s absolute holiness, and so it’s willing to acknowledge its own sin.

When you go to an important occasion, and you may be not properly dressed for it, you get very apologetic. You know, I’ve had that happen to me. I’ve shared with you sometimes when it happens, and I remember the first time that I was at a Moody Pastors Conference. I wasn’t a speaker; I just went to be refreshed in my heart. And I had been doing something that afternoon, and I was casual, and I had on a Mickey Mouse shirt. Normally, I don’t wear a Mickey Mouse shirt around important places, but I thought I’d slip in the auditorium and hear the final message that night. And president got up and said, “Is John MacArthur in the audience? If he is, I’d like to have him come up and lead us in prayer.” That was the first and last time I wore a Mickey Mouse shirt at a pastors conference, and there I was in my Mickey Mouse shirt.

And, of course, it gets funnier the longer you think about it. That was long ago when I was young and foolish, but what was obvious in my mind afterwards was I just kept apologizing. “I don’t know why you asked me to pray. I’m sure if you knew, you would never have asked me up here. I didn’t belong up here. I wasn’t properly dressed. I just, I was out of place.” And you stumble and bumble and fumble around because you know you didn’t belong there so attired.

And that is very much the essence of what confession is in prayer. It is going into the presence of holy God with a recognition that you're not properly suited to be there, except by virtue of the righteousness of Christ which has covered you. And certainly, in view of that, there ought to be a setting aside of all sinfulness. As one writer put it, before he ever could beseech the Lord on behalf of anything, this was how he began his prayer. "Give me a horror of sin, a dread of its approach, a deeper repentance. Help me to chastely flee it and jealously to resolve that my heart shall be Thine alone. Plow deep in me, great Lord, heavenly Husbandman, that my being may be a tilled field, the roots of grace spreading far and wide until Thou alone art seen in me. Thy beauty golden like summer harvest. Thy fruitfulness as the plenty of autumn."

In other words, the preparation of the heart before the request. Paul had such a deep sense of sin. In Romans 7, he speaks of it. In 1 Timothy 1:15, he calls himself the "Chief of sinners, one who is totally unworthy to preach." Confession was a daily part of Daniel's life, too, and it is a part of anyone's prayers. And I really feel that that's just another good reason for the Lord's table. Because to prepare ourselves for the Lord's table, we must confess our sinfulness. And in so doing, and confessing sin, we then open up the potentiality for full fellowship in prayer, as well.

Confession was a part of the daily life of Daniel, as I said, and yet there were times when special confession was needed. Just because Daniel confesses his sin right here doesn't mean that he never did it before. Doesn't mean he waited till big events to do it. But most of us do that. We don't deal with our sin on a daily basis. We tend to stack it up until we hit the fan, so to speak, until we arrive at communion or until a disaster comes, or we're about to lose our job, or we don't know what's going wrong in our life. And then all of a sudden we get very confessional.

Daniel confessed his sin all the time, but still there were times in his life when great events faced him, when there was a greater sense of sinfulness. We find it in the Old Testament, for example, in Leviticus 16:21. It says on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, that great day when the sins of all the nation for the year were atoned for. That was the day of tremendous, great confession; not instead of daily confession, but in addition to. In 2 Chronicles chapter 29 and verse 6, when Hezekiah saw God bringing a great revival, there was in response to that a tremendous outpouring of confession. In the 9th chapter of the book of Ezra verses 4 to 15, we find again, when God's Word revives the hearts of people in preparation for God's moving in their midst and doing mighty things, there was great confession. In chapter 1 and in chapter 9 of Nehemiah, we see the same thing, and, of course, in Matthew 3, as John the Baptist arrives, and he declares the Messiah is coming, he calls for the people to confess and repent and bring forth fruits of repentance.

Jeremiah, of course, when he cried out about coming judgment in the 3rd chapter, the 8th chapter, the 14th chapter, and again in Lamentations chapter 1, Jeremiah says, "God is coming, and because God is coming, you need to prepare yourself by the confession of your sin." And it is as true as any of those places that we meet the Lord here at His table, is it not? And so we should be prepared in

hearts by the confession of our sin.

Now, we note that that's exactly what happens in verses 5 to 14. Notice verse 5, "We have sinned, have committed iniquity, have done wickedly, have rebelled." Verse 6, "Neither have we hearkened unto Thy servants the prophets." Verse 9, "To the Lord God, or the Lord our God, belong mercies and forgiveness though we have rebelled against Him; neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God to talk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel has transgressed Thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey Thy voice."

And so, repeatedly, does he speak of their sin. This is confession, and all through the prayer, over and over again, comes the confession. Now what is he doing? Now listen to this. Daniel is in effect saying this, "We deserve the judgment we're getting. Agreed, acknowledged, affirmed. I'm not denying it." And that is a wonderful thing. Confession has many fruits. One, it's simply an acknowledging of my sinfulness so that the Lord can purify me; but, two, it is an acknowledgement of my sinfulness so that when God chastens me, I admit that I deserve it.

Had to discipline Melinda the other day, and I disciplined her pretty hard. And I said to her later, I said, "You know why I had to do that, don't you, honey?" She said, "Yes." There was no question in her mind. She expressed her love to me with a great big kiss and a hug. She knew I had done justly, because she was getting the fruits of her sin, and, in a sense, that's what God is saying. When we confess our sin, we free God to chasten us with no thought of inequity or injustice.

Let me give you an illustration. Turn in your Bible to Joshua chapter 7, Joshua chapter 7, sixth book in the Old Testament. Joshua said to Achan, verse 19. Achan, you remember, was guilty of stealing things from Jericho. God said, "When you go in and take the city, don't take anything out of the city." And he went in and stole a bunch of stuff and brought it back and buried it in his tent, and Joshua confronted him about it. The Lord had made it very obvious that he had done this. A

nd so he said, "'My son – " Joshua 7:19, said to Achen " -give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel and make confession unto Him. And tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me.' And Achen answered Joshua and said, 'Indeed, I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done.'" And he went over the details. "'When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonish garment and two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them and took them; and behold, they are hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent and the silver under it.' Joshua sent messengers. They ran to the tent. Behold, it was hidden in his ten, and the silver was under it. They took them out of the midst of the tent, brought them unto Joshua and all of the children of Israel, laid them out before the Lord. And Joshua, and all the children of Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver and the garment and the wedge of gold, and his sons and his daughters, and his oxen and his asses and his sheep, and his tent and all that he had; and they brought them unto the Valley of Achor. And Joshua said, 'Why hast thou

troubled us?'" In other words, your sin has affected the whole country, the whole people.

"'The Lord shall trouble thee this day.' And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger. Wherefore, the name of that place was called the Valley of Trouble – " that's what Achor means " - unto this day."

Now, listen, somebody was reading through the Book of Joshua, and you read the story of Achan minus verses 19 and 20, you'd say, "Well, now, what kind of a God is going to do that? That is severe. I mean everybody died. Every animal died. They burned up his tent. Every remnant of the man's life was eliminated." It wouldn't make any sense, and you might think God unjust and inequitable if you didn't read verses 19 and 20. He confessed. He said, "I have sinned." And when he said that, he admitted that he deserved to die, for the wages of sin is what? Death. And that goes all the way back. "In the day that you disobey," God said to Adam, "you shall surely – " what? " - die." "Man who is in sin –" says Ezekiel " - shall die." In other words, the confession of sin does two things. Number one, it brings about a forgiveness, but it also frees God to chasten without any inequity. Now, He doesn't have any inequity, but it makes public the demonstration that the punishment is deserved.

I think it's a good point, people, because we tend to wonder why things don't always go the way we think they ought to go. Listen, if you got what you deserved, you'd been dead long ago. So would I. The very fact you take another breath is the grace of God. So we have to acknowledge our sinfulness, and free God from any thought of injustice.

Look back for a moment at 1 Samuel chapter 4, 1 Samuel 4. We've looked at this passage some time in the past, and I'll just remind you of it. The Philistines and the Israelites were having a battle. They had 'em all the time. And the Israelites were losing. They were really afraid. And so somebody said, "You better go get God." They hadn't paid any attention to God for who knows how long, and so they decided to get God. Well, God was represented by a little box known as the Ark of the Covenant, so they sent for the Ark of the Covenant. And they said, "Get the Ark of the Covenant down here," in the early part of chapter 4, around verses 4, 5, and 6. In come the guys carrying the Ark of the Covenant, the little box on the poles in the backs of priests, and they come in with it. And what happens? Philistines are afraid in verse 7, and said, "God has come unto the camp! Woe unto us!" They say in verse 8, "Woe unto us! Who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness."

And so they really panicked. Here was God. Now, of course, they were idolatrous, so they thought this was their idol. This was just a little box as a representation of God, but it stood for God's presence. And, of course, the Hebrews were thrilled, "God has arrived! The victory is ours!" They thought God was a utilitarian genie. You rub Him a little and say, "Do Your thing," and He does it, but He wasn't. They had not lived a righteous life, and God was not about to come to their rescue, and so

the fighting went on in verse 10, and Israel lost. That's a switch. Not only that, the Philistines stole the ark. They ran off with the little box. If you think that's trouble for Israel, you don't know the story. That's trouble for the Philistines. Now they've got God on their hands.

Verse 1 of chapter 5 says that, "The Philistines took the Ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. Philistines took the Ark of God. They brought it to the house of Dagon." They had a god named Dagon, and Dagon was half fish and half man in his representation, and they figured is the God of the Israelites. We'll stick it in the house of our god, and we'll have two gods. So they put it in there and, of course, they came back the next day, verse 3, "And there was Dagon fallen on his face, bowed down before the Ark of the Lord." God doesn't tolerate any competition.

And so they wondered what happened. It says, "They picked up Dagon, and set him in his place again." Couldn't figure out how he tipped over; must've been a localized earthquake. "They arose early the next morning, and Dagon was fallen on his face again to the ground." Only this time both the palms of his hands and his head were cut off, and only a stump was left. And God was saying, "I put him where I wanted him. Don't lift him up anymore."

And, by the way, verse 5 says nobody every worshipped Dagon anymore. I guess not. Who wants to worship a loser? And verse 6 says, "And the hand of the Lord was heavy on them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them and smote them with - " and now you have all kinds of translations. Some of your Bibles say hemorrhoids. That's got to be the worst translation of all. Some of them say emerods. It sounds like a flower. The right translation is tumors. All of a sudden, they got tumors, and they had tumors in their internal parts. Verse 9 talks about their secret parts. It means their internal, buried deep in them. They started getting tumors.

Well, the people of Ashdod said, "Look, could you get rid of that box? It's bringing us terrible plague." So they took the little box over to Gath. You remember Gath? There was a tall man from there by the name of Goliath. So they took it to Gath, and everybody in Gath got the same thing. So the people said, "Take it to Ekron." It's going from city to city in Philistia. Took it to Ekron, and the same thing happened there, and the Ekronites cried out and said, "Get that thing out of here." And so now they decide to have a meeting of all the minds of the lands so they can figure out how to get it back where they got it, because two things began to happen. The people who didn't get the tumors died in a plague that were brought by mice. Something like a bubonic plague or a Black Death, and people were dying all over the place.

The Ark of the Lord was in the country of the Philistines, chapter 6 says, for seven months. Seven months. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, and said, "What are we going to do to the ark of the Lord? Tell us in what we shall send it to its place. Where does it belong? Let's get it back." And they said, "If you send away the ark of God of Israel, send it not empty. Don't send it back empty. But, by all means, return Him a – " what? " - trespass offering." I ask you a simple question. To

what does a trespass offering admit? Sin. Those pagans, in their pagan mentality, at least realized that it was their fault that this was happening to them. You see?

And they weren't waving their fists like Revelation 16, when the people in the future Tribulation are scorched with fire and they curse the God of heaven and blaspheme His name. No, no, they were saying, in effect, "Boy, we have offended that God, and we better make it right. We're getting what we deserve." And so they said, "Well, we're going to have to make some kind of an offering." And they said, "What'll it be?" verse 4. They said, "Send them back five golden tumors and five golden mice." Now, that is what's known as a votive offering. The pagans very often did this. They replicated the disease or the plague in clay or wood or metal, and offered it to the god as an affirmation that they knew the plague came from that deity.

I was in the city of Corinth, and a little man took us in a little room that they don't show everybody there. It contains votive offerings dug up around the site of ancient Corinth where they worshipped the god Asclepius, who was believed to be the god of healing. And in so worshipping this god, whenever they came to offer their sacrifices to Asclepius, they would make little clay models of whatever part, whatever limb or internal part of the body was diseased. And they would offer it to the deity as a recognition that they knew their disease came because they'd offended him. And the place is just covered with thousands of those little things that have been dug up. That's a votive offering.

And so they molded golden tumors and golden mice, speaking of the plague, and then it says in verse 5, "You shall give glory unto the God of Israel, and perhaps He will lighten His hand from you and your gods and your land." In other words, they said, "You've got to admit it's your fault." Beloved, this is one of the very essential elements of confession.

Confessions isn't a flippant thing. It is a recognition that you have offended holy God. And if things aren't right in your life, it's because you have brought it upon yourself, because God is righteous and must react against unrighteousness. True? It's only His grace that keeps us from being consumed.

Now, back to Daniel. So Daniel is praying a prayer of confession, and he acknowledges that the captivity, the seventy years and all the judgments and punishments are deserved because of the sins of the people. The end of verse 15, I think, sums it up. "We have sinned. We have done wickedly." Verse 16, "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." It isn't anybody's fault but our own.

Let me sum it up. True intercessory prayer is generated by God's Word, grounded in God's will, characterized by fervency, realized in self-denial, identified with others, and strengthened in confession. Two last points, briefly. Number seven, true intercessory prayer is dependent on God's

character. It's dependent on God's character. You know, if God was like the gods of the Philistines, it really wouldn't do a lot of good to ask for forgiveness, because their gods were evil, cruel gods in their own mind, but not so our God. We pray our prayer of forgiveness, our prayer of confession. We call on God on the behalf of His people. We intercede for needs of others, because we believe God hears and responds, right? All prayer, then, is based on the character of God.

Now, notice how that character is developed beginning in verse 4. "I prayed to the Lord my God, and made my confession and said – " now watch " – O Lord, the great and awesome God." First of all, he says great. Now that word means powerful. In other words, I pray to God because God is powerful enough to respond. He's not impotent. He can turn the circumstances. He has all of the resources infinitely at His disposal. He is the God in verse 15 who "brought His people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand." It's wonderful to pray to a God who is omnipotent, isn't it? I mean wouldn't it be awful to pray to a God who was only the second most powerful deity and had to work everything through another one? What a hopeless situation, but He is powerful.

Secondly, he is awesome. That means majesty. Not only power but majesty. It means He is to be honored. He is to be glorified. He is to be exalted. He is to be lifted up. He is to be praised. He is worthy. He is the most powerful, and He is the most majestic. Look what else. Keeping the covenant, keeping the covenant. Not only do we see His power and His majesty, but His faithfulness. When God makes a promise, He keeps it. And He made a covenant with His people that He'd never forsake them, right? And if they repented, He'd forgive them; and if they obeyed Him, He'd restore them, and God keeps His promises.

The Bible says, "Call upon Me, and I'll answer thee and show thee great and might things which thou knowest not." And we believe that, don't we? The Bible says that, "If our hearts are pure and our sins are set aside, and we call upon His name, He'll respond to our call." We pray because we believe God has the power to fulfill it, because He is the most majestic one in the universe, and is worthy of our prayers; and because He is a faithful God who will keep His promises.

Notice also in verse 4, it says that, "He has mercy to them that love Him." Mercy to them that love Him. Let me just say that the word mercy there is really love. He will forgive because He loves. He will grant us what we ask in His will because He loves. It's one thing to be powerful. It's something else to be majestic. It's especially wonderful to be faithful, but what encompasses faithfulness is love. Love! And then notice further as you go down.

Verse 7, "O Lord, righteousness belongs to Thee." He is holy. He'll do what is right; not what is wrong. How wonderful to know that. God can never do a wrong thing. Always right, always right, always right. No matter what He does, it's right. It's right, it's right, it's right. Isn't that great to have that kind of God? Never makes a mistake, never has a folly, never a blunder.

Our God is powerful, majestic, faithful, loving, and absolutely holy, and then how wonderful to know that He is merciful and forgiving. And that may be the heart of it all. In verse 9 it says, “To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses.” I like the fact that forgiveness is in the plural, don’t you? I’ve needed it more than once. Have you? Forgivenesses, mercies. And so we can say our God is a gracious God. He is powerful, majestic, faithful, loving, holy, and gracious.

Now, that’s the kind of God we seek in our prayers. As we gather at the Lord’s table, and we look at the cross, we see all of those things. As I look at the cross, I see His power, because on that cross He conquers sin and death and Satan and hell, right? That’s power. As I look at the cross, I see His majesty, for there He is, a victim in appearance of the Romans and the Jews’ and yet step by step controlling every single thing that’s happening on the cross. And one standing afar off and watching him control His own dying and control every event to fulfill prophecy uttered in absolute astonishment, “Truly this was the Son of God.” He was majestic, even in dying.

I look at the cross, and I see His faithfulness. He said that He would die for us. He said that He had to go to the cross. He said the Son of Man had to die. Even though in the Garden He agonized about it, He kept His promise. He’s faithful. I look at the cross, and I see His love, because He shouldn’t have been there. I should have been there. But because He loved, He took my place. I look at the cross, and I see His holiness, because it is holiness that put Him there. He couldn’t just forgive sinners. He had to pay the price to deal with the sin, because He cannot tolerate sin. Its penalty must be paid. And I see His mercy and forgiveness there. He is gracious.

You see, all that God is to Daniel, God is to us. And Daniel knows it from his dealings with his people, and we know it from the cross. We see His power, His majesty, His faithfulness, His love, His holiness, His grace; and that’s the basis of our prayers. I’m so glad to pray for a God who’s all powerful. I’m so glad to pray to a God who’s absolutely majestic and controls all the circumstances of the whole world. I’m so glad to pray to a God who’s absolutely faithful to His children, who loves them. I’m glad to pray to a God who’s utterly and absolutely holy and will always do right. And I’m glad to pray to a God who’s gracious and forgives and forgives and forgives.

So genuine intercessory prayer, you see, is generated by the Word of God, grounded in the will of God, characterized by fervency, realized in self-denial, identified with God’s people, strengthened in confession, and dependent on God’s character. A final thought. Intercessory prayer, finally, consummates in God’s glory. It consummates in God’s glory.

Look at verse 16, and just follow as I read through 19. “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.” Now, stop there for a minute. He says, “God, Jerusalem,

Your city, Zion, Your holy mountain, because of us has had to receive Your fury and Your anger. Turn from that, for Your people have become a reproach to You." In other words, don't do it for us. Do it for You. See? All prayer consummates in God's glory. Do it for You.

Verse 17, "Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Thy servant and his supplications, and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the – " what? " -Lord's sake." Not for our sakes, O Lord, but for the Lord's sake. Verse 18, "O my God, incline Thine ear and hear. Open Thine eyes and behold our desolations and the city which is called by Thy name; for we do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousnesses, but for Thy great mercies." We're not making claims based upon our own righteousness. We saying, "Do it, that You might manifest Your great mercy. This city is called by Your name, and Your reputation is at stake."

In verse 19, "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." You see, it's all over those four verses. Do it for You, not for us. You see, the captivity of Judah and the nonexistence of the Jerusalem sanctuary was interpreted by the nations around it to indicate that Judah's God was either powerless or a delusion altogether. And Daniel is saying, "God, vindicate Your name. Don't let Your name be smeared. Don't be evil spoken of. Don't let our sin corrupt Your reputation." Boy, that is a mature prayer. Forgive us for Your sake.

I tell you, people, we live in a day when prayer is an infinitely far cry from that kind of thing. People are praying only for their own ends. God is to be glorified. Jeremiah says the same thing. Jeremiah 29:17, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, 'Behold, I'll send upon them the sword, the famine, the pestilence, and make them like vile figs that can't be eaten, they're so bad. And I'll persecute them with the sword and the famine and the pestilence and deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse and a horror and a hissing and a reproach among all the nations to which I've driven them, because they have not hearkened to My words,' saith the Lord, 'which I sent unto them by My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but you would not hear,' saith the Lord."

God says, "I'm going to wipe you right out for a period of time because of your evil, but the prophet says, "God, don't prolong it. It's so horrible. We are a hissing among the nations, and it's Your reputation that's at stake. We bear Your name." The Psalmist calls upon God in the same regard. I think it's Psalm 102. Let me check to be sure, verse 12, "But Thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever, and Thy remembrance to all generations. Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favor her, yea, the set time has come. For Thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof. So the nation shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth Thy glory. When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. This shall be written for the generation to come, and the people who shall be created shall praise the Lord. For He hath looked down from the height of His sanctuary;

from heaven did the Lord behold the earth."

In other words, the Psalmist says, "God, when You come back and rebuild Your city, the people will look back and say, 'The Lord is great!'" Do you pray like that? Do you pray that God will do certain things in your life and in this church and in the lives of others that He might be glorified? In John 14, our dear Lord said, as we saw so many times in the Disciples' Prayer, he said, "Ask and you shall receive, that the Father may be – " what? " - glorified in the Son."

Daniel says, "We've sinned, and we've brought the reproach, and we've corrupted Your name. And that's not fair. Turn it around, God. Forgive us and restore the virtue and the holiness and the majesty of Your name in the eyes of the world. We bear Your name. Vindicate it."

And I think, to me – this is a personal word as we close. To me, it is the most severe element of sin that it brings reproach upon the name of God, whose name I bear. Right? I mean if I was only trying to protect my own reputation, I'd be more prone to fall into sin. But it's God's reputation that is the issue. A series of verbs climax this passage. "Hear, forgive, hearken, do, and defer not. Do it, Lord."

And what have we learned? Prayer is generated by the Word of God, grounded in the will of God, characterized by fervency, realized in self-denial, identified with others, strengthened in confession, dependent on God's character, and consummated in God's glory. And that kind of prayer, beloved, gets an answer. And I mean not just any answer, but an answer so absolutely overwhelming that it may be the most glorious prophecy in all the Book of Daniel. For that, you're going to have to wait three months beginning in verse 20.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank You tonight that we've been able to share this final look at the prayer of Daniel. Help us to pray as You taught Daniel to pray. And now as we prepare our hearts for Your table, we pray that You'll speak to us in a very special way, and that we might hear what You have to say.

While your heads are bowed for just a moment, let me suggest a prayer to you that you might pray. You know, the Bible says you're not to come to the table of the Lord in an unworthy manner. And in order to prepare your heart, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11, "You want to examine yourself." In a while, you're going to meet and commune with the Lord in His table. The Bible tells us that when we take the bread, we commune with His body and His blood in the cup. And as we do partake of these things, we commune with Him in the fullest and most wonderful sense. As we do that, I trust your heart is prepared, and you've confessed any sin that stands between Himself and you.

And you might think through this prayer. Merciful Lord, pardon all my sins of this day. Sins of omission and commission, of morose peevish and angry tempers, of lip and life and walk. Sins of hard-heartedness, unbelief, presumption, pride, sins of unfaithfulness to the souls of men, of lack of

bold decision in the cause of Christ. Sins of deficiency in outspoken zeal for Your glory, sins of bringing dishonor upon Your great name. Sins of deception, injustice, untruthfulness. Sins of impurity in thought, word, and deed, of covetousness, of substance unduly hoarded and improvidently squandered, and not consecrated to the glory of Thee, the great giver. Sins in private and in the family, in study and recreation, in the study of Thy Word and the neglect of it. In prayer, irreverently offered and coldly withheld. Sins in time misspent, sins in yield to Satan's wiles, and opening my heart to his temptation. Sins in being unwatchful when I know he's nigh. Sins in quenching the Holy Spirit. Sins against light and knowledge, against conscious, and the restraints of thy Spirit. Sins against the law of eternal love.

Pardon all my sins known and unknown, felt and unfelt, confessed and not confessed, remembered and forgotten. Hear, O Lord, and hearing, forgive. That's our prayer, Father. And as we examine our own hearts, we might sense You're speaking to us, revealing those sins that we need to set aside, and revealing to us the path of obedience. We pray, too, Lord, that as we look to the cross at this very time, that we might see in it the wonder that is there of the One who has forgiven us our sin. In Christ name. Amen.

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