

A scenic landscape photograph of a mountain range with a lake and forest. The mountains are covered in snow and partially obscured by a hazy sky. A calm lake reflects the surrounding green forest and the sky. The overall mood is peaceful and majestic.

# SEASONS OF PREVAILING PRAYER

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A STUDY FROM THE BOOK OF DANIEL

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April, 2017

## From the First Day

In Daniel 9:3 we learn that Daniel set his face to seek the Lord by prayer. In this special week of prayer, would you do the same?

The name “Daniel” means, “God is my Judge.” We do what we do in the sight of God. In 2 Chronicles 16:9, the prophet Hanani declared an important truth to King Asa: **“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him.”** This is still true today. **“In all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us”** (Romans 8:37).

So set your face to seek the Lord. Enter into a season of prevailing prayer with the full knowledge that **“the prayer of the upright is His delight”** (Proverbs 15:8).

The Book of Daniel includes four references to seasons of prevailing prayer. In the first episode, the lives of Daniel and his friends were in danger. They gathered in *corporate prayer* (group prayer) to **“desire mercies of the God of heaven”** (Daniel 2:18-19). The Lord answered, and **“Daniel blessed the God of heaven.”**

On another occasion, Daniel faced the threat of death alone. In a foolish decision, the king decreed it to be “politically incorrect” to pray to anyone but himself for thirty days. How did the man of God respond? **“Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime”** (Daniel 6:10). This shows us the value of

consistent *private prayer*. In this season of prevailing prayer, **“Daniel believed in his God”** (Daniel 6:23). The Lord delivered him from the lions’ den.

In the third season of prevailing prayer, Daniel was burdened for his nation, Israel. As we shall see, his *intercessory prayer* sprang from his understanding of Biblical prophecy. Daniel helps us to understand the answer

*“We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us”*

to an important question. Since Biblical prophecy is true, what should we do? Daniel’s answer is found in Daniel 9:3: **“And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:”**

This devotional study is dedicated to the study of Daniel’s prayer in Daniel chapter 9. But there is one more reference to a season of prevailing prayer in Daniel chapter 10. And once again it was connected with understanding Biblical prophecy.

**“In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.”** (Daniel 10:2-3)

In this season of prevailing prayer, we see the value of *persistent prayer*. Consider the answer that Daniel received in Daniel 10:12-13: **“Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.”**

**But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.”**

*He who knows how to overcome with God in prayer has heaven and earth at his disposal.*

- C.H. Spurgeon

Consider three phrases carefully. Each of these was spoken by the heavenly messenger sent by God.

- **“From the first day”** that Daniel set his heart to understand, God heard him. Set your heart on this certainty. This week of prayer can be a season of prevailing prayer from the very first day.
- **“I have come because of you words”** God’s answer came as a direct result of Daniel’s persistent, prevailing prayer. As New Testament believers, we have even greater confidence. Because Jesus gave Himself for our sins, died and rose again, we can make our bold appeals before the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16). **“And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us”** (1 John 5:14). Daniel’s answer came because of his prayerful words; your answer will come in the same fashion.
- **“But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days:”** Make no mistake: prayer is spiritual warfare. This is a reference to the conflict between the demons and the angels. This ongoing clash is the unseen battle behind current events. Those who know how to pray are like the highly trained Special Forces in today’s military.

If you truly set your face to seek the Lord, you can expect all kinds of resistance. Take heart from this trouble! You are getting through to God. A.B. Simpson wrote, ““Many of our battles are fought in view of heaven alone.

. . . Have you not felt, beloved, in some quiet hour, in the secret of your closet, that you were going through a decisive battle which no mortal saw? Within the silent walls of your chamber an issue was being decided which would affect all eternity.”<sup>1</sup>

*Those who know how to pray are like the highly trained Special Forces in today’s military.*

From the very first day that you set your heart to pray, you know that God hears you. One of the greatest privileges you have is to know that the answer comes **“for your words.”** So enter into this spiritual warfare and persevere in a season of prevailing prayer.

## Kingdoms and the King

Daniel 9:1-3

Daniel 9:24-27 “contains perhaps the most significant prophecy for understanding most other OT and NT eschatological [prophetic] passages . . .”<sup>ii</sup> “It has been described as “the ‘key’ to prophetic interpretation...the ‘backbone’ of prophecy.”<sup>iii</sup> “Desmond Ford says that it is not only the devotional heart of the book but also contains ‘the crown jewels’ of Old Testament prophecy.”<sup>iv</sup>

This is most significant for our devotional study. This crucial prophecy was given between two seasons of prevailing prayer.

Daniel helps us answer the question: “*Since Biblical prophecy is true, what should we do?*”

*“The crown jewels of Old Testament prophecy”*

Habakkuk 2:3 guides us in how to abide in eager anticipation of the fulfillment of Biblical

prophecies: “Wait for it!” In this study, we will learn how to “wait for it” in seasons of prevailing prayer.

This practical application leaps off the page in Daniel 9:1-3.

**“In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; <sup>2</sup> In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:”**

In our day, we are watching significant changes among the nations and their leaders. Daniel observed the same thing. What

did he do when saw that the Medes and Persians had conquered the Babylonians? According to verse 2, he pored over the Old Testament prophecies. There he found the prophecy recorded in Jeremiah 29:10-11:

**“For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. <sup>11</sup> For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”**

*Since Biblical prophecy is true, what should we do?*

In Daniel 9:1-3, we find powerful fuel for faithful prayer. He understood that his nation’s captivity was drawing to an end.

The time was almost up. So how did he respond? When Daniel studied political movements in light of prophetic messages, it moved him to pray. Here is the way to “wait for it” in our day. When we understand God’s way, the current events of our day should move us to pray. You can rest in the fact that God’s providence is fulfilling His prophecies. Wait for it!

### Political Movements

Four kings are mentioned in Daniel: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Cyrus, and Darius. Each name is listed, and, occasionally, additional information was given. But Daniel 9:1 is “the most detailed reference to any king in the book of Daniel.”<sup>v</sup> Daniel’s extended description should cause us to give it careful, deliberative thought. **“In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the**

*Powerful fuel for faithful prayer*

**seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans;”**

The Medes and Persians had conquered the Chaldeans. So in the first year of the reign of Ahasuerus [Xerxes], Daniel gave a careful report. Darius was a Mede who was made to be king over the Chaldean kingdom. In the words of Charles McClain, “Not only has a transition taken place, but the extended introductory formula causes the reader to slow his pace and invites his focused attention on what follows.”<sup>vi</sup>

**Prophetic Messages**

It is absolutely necessary that we grasp the importance of political movements. But this is only possible in the light of God’s prophetic messages. From Jeremiah 29:10, Daniel understood that Biblical prophecy was about to be fulfilled! How did he respond?

**He Moved His Heart to Pray**

Here is the heart of the heart of the message. “**And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:”** (Daniel 9:3). When Daniel observed the changes in the kingdom, He made his appeals to the unchanging King. When we understand God’s way, the current events of our day should move us to pray. Daniel was no passive

*Daniel understood that Biblical prophecy was about to be fulfilled! How did he respond?*

fatalist. He did not just sit back and wait for God to fulfill His prophecy. Daniel remembered that the

sin of his people had shackled them as captives of a foreign

nation. So when he understood God’s revelation, he cried out for God’s reviving work. We can do the same. Because we have the New Testament, we have an even better understanding of the prophecies in Daniel 9:24-27. Let’s follow Daniel’s example. Let’s greet this greater understanding of prophecy with more fervent prayer.

The most important Biblical prophecies were fulfilled in the

*When he understood God’s revelation, he cried out for God’s reviving work. We can do the same.*

passion of Jesus Christ. How did He prepare for this prophetic fulfillment? He prayed! (Matthew 26:36-39) And He made this

simple appeal to His followers: “**Could you not watch with me one hour?**” Will you answer His call? Will you set your face to seek the Lord God by prayer and supplication? May God grant that this will be your season of prevailing prayer.

Please see Appendix 1, *How to Spend an Hour in Prayer.*

## Seeking the Lord by Prayer

Daniel 9:3-4

**“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, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments.”**

### The Humbled Heart

In that season of prevailing prayer, Daniel humbled his heart to seek the God of heaven. He did so with fasting, chastening his heart before God. (This is instructive, because Jesus said in His Sermon on the Mount, **“when you fast”** (Matthew 6:16), not “if you fast.”) God honored this meek approach as we see in Daniel 10:12. **“. . .for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.”** Daniel “chastened himself before God.” Then Daniel prayed with passion.

### Proclaiming God’s Glory

When Daniel made his confession, he did not begin with sin, but with the glory of God. Try this approach and see if it does not fuel your passion for prayer. Spend the first part of your prayer time in simply praising God. Using your experiences and Biblical expressions, just revel in the Presence of God and praise Him. Praise Him until you sense the pleasure of His Presence. Keep at it until you have the distinct perception that God is pleased with your praise.

Knowing God is the most essential preparation for praying to God. Jesus’ prayed passionately: **“This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent”** (John 17:3). Daniel’s passionate prayer was fueled by his passion for the glory of God.

### A Biography of God

In verses 3 and 4, we get a glimpse of Daniel’s “biography of God” that helped him to pray. With

*When Daniel made his confession, he did not begin with sin, but with the glory*

heartfelt praise, Daniel proclaimed the glory of God. This was no mere listing of God’s characteristics from a doctrinal study. Here is the beating heart of prayer and the marrow which provides the lifeblood for all praying that pleases God. In these verses, we learn a great deal about God by the names with which He is addressed.

### The Lord God

These words combined translate the Hebrew words [Adonai] (meaning “master” or “lord”) and [Elohim] meaning “God.” This is the “Lord God” to whom blinded Samson prayed from his

*Here is the beating heart of prayer* captivity (Judges 16:28). David exalted the “Lord God” who had made a covenant with him (2 Samuel 7:19-20). He is the

One who imparts strength (Psalm 71:16) and He alone is worthy of our trust (Psalm 73:28). The “Lord God” gathers the outcasts of Israel (Isaiah 56:8) and He anointed Christ to preach (Isaiah 61:1, Luke 4:16-21). This combined name for God occurs only once in the book of Daniel, here in chapter 9, verse 3. After the momentous introduction of verses 1 and 2, we see Daniel’s

reverent approach to God. Daniel did not breeze into God's presence lightly. No, he guided his heart and set his face to address [Adonai Elohim], the Lord God.

### The LORD my God

Here the title "the LORD my God" translates [Yahweh] (or [Jehovah] with God [Elohim]). To those in bondage in Egypt, the LORD sent a message by Moses:

**"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. <sup>15</sup> And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations"** (Exodus 3:14-15).

It is not surprising then to see that Daniel uses this name of God to make his appeal for the captives in Babylon. This is the personal name of God, and has been described as His essence. He is eternal and unchanging. This name of the LORD [Yahweh] occurs only seven times in the book of Daniel – and every time, it is here in Daniel chapter 9.

In verse 2, it was **"the Word of the LORD"** that stirred Daniel's heart. So he prayed to **"the LORD my God."** He confessed that his nation had not obeyed the voice of "the LORD our God." It is the LORD who allows evil to haunt His people until they repent (vs.

13-14). And it was while Daniel was praying to "the LORD my God" (vs. 20) that the Lord sent the answer.

### The Great and Awesome God

Daniel made his direct appeal with the words, **"O Lord, the great and dreadful God . . ."** Our great God inspired awe in the heart of humbled Daniel. If we are to pray in a passionate and effective manner, this should be true of us as well. Praise our great God until your heart is filled with awe.

### The Covenant Keeping God of Mercy

This is the great LORD who made a covenant with Abraham (Genesis 22:16-18). This covenant resulted in the coming of Christ: **"And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed . . ."** This is the God who keeps His covenants and maintains His steadfast love. Those who love Him and keep His commandments revel in His immeasurable mercies. His greatest mercy is this: **"Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities"** (Acts 3:26). As we shall see, Daniel's prayer called upon this mercy to the greatest possible degree.

So the man whose name means "God is my Judge" introduced his prayer to God. He did so with passionate praise to God. From a heart full of awe, He praised his Lord and Master, the Eternal unchanging LORD. And knowing God's covenant promises and steadfast love, Daniel entered into a season of prevailing prayer.

## Our Wickedness and God's Word

Daniel 9:5-6

**“We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments: <sup>6</sup> Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spoke in Thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.”**

In his season of prevailing prayer, Daniel knew that he must get the right perspective on sin. What is “sin” anyway? To some, it is an outmoded idea from some ancient dustbin of history. Who talks about sin anymore?

If we are to prevail in this season of prayer, we must get a grip on how sin grieves our God. We cannot rightly comprehend sin until we comprehend the holy nature of our Sovereign God. We cannot prevail in prayer until sin is dealt with in the right way. This is why Daniel’s prayer begins with consummate praise to God. “This prayer is a model for believers today as they approach God. After a brief introduction (v. 4a) it

“This prayer is a model for believers today as they approach God.”

proceeds with adoration of the Lord (v. 4b), is followed by confession of personal and national sin (vv. 5–14), and concludes with the prophet’s petition (vv. 15–19). Here is the proper order, for only after the Lord is praised and sin confessed is the believer qualified to offer requests to the holy God.”<sup>vii</sup>

When we rightly proclaim the glory of God, we will rightly explain the nature of sin. We will understand our wickedness when we see it as a violation of God’s Word.

These two verses list six different aspects of Israel’s sins. Take the time to consider if these are not your own sins and the sins of your nation. The first three emphasize the nature of wickedness. The last three emphasize that these are serious departures from God’s Word.

**“We have sinned”** – The word “sinned” here translates the Hebrew word [ḥāṭā] meaning “to miss the mark.” In Exodus 20:20, Moses explained why God had given the Ten

Commandments. **“Fear**

**not: for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before your faces, that you sin [ḥāṭā] not.”** God did not want His

people to miss the mark of holy living. The same word

is used in Judges 20:16 of seven hundred men who could sling a stone at a hair’s breadth and not miss. Sin misses the mark of God’s standard for holy living.

**“Committed iniquity”** – The root of the word translated “iniquity” emphasizes that it is something twisted or perverse. So, Proverbs 12:8 reminds us that **“He that is of a perverse heart shall be despised.”**

**“Have done wickedly”** – This word “wickedly” indicates that the evil actions are worthy of strong condemnation. This is an indictment for deliberate criminal actions against God and men.

*When we rightly proclaim the glory of God, we will rightly explain the nature of sin.*

Would you not agree that our nation has missed the mark of God's righteous standard? We have become a twisted and perverse people. We have deliberately done wrong and deserve God's judgment. But even worse, we have ignored the Word of God that He gave to turn us back to Him.

**"Have rebelled"** – "Rebelled" or "turned away" emphasizes that the nation had turned its back on God. Do you see this in your own nation?

**Departed from God's precepts** – God's Word was designed to show us God's ways (Psalm 119:15). Like the Ten Commandments, the rest of God's Word was given to us so that we would not miss the mark. But Israel had departed from God's Law (see verses 10-11). Our nation has also turned its back on the ways of God.

**Have not listened to God's prophets** – The final indictment was this. God had sent His messengers to declare His prophecies. They not only told the truth, they foretold the future. Yet the people had not listened to the prophets.

But Daniel was determined that this would change. He would listen to God's prophets. He had understood Jeremiah's prophecy and knew that Israel's captivity was drawing to a close. He confessed the way that his nation had rebelled against God's precepts. He admitted that they had become a nation of deliberate evil, twisting God's ways. In prayer, he plead guilty for his nation; they had missed the mark of the high calling of God.

In this season of prevailing prayer, will you join Daniel in confessing the sins of your nation?

## Whose Belongings Are These?

Daniel 9:7-10

**"O Lord, righteousness *belongs* unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, *that are* near, and *that are* far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us *belongs* confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against Thee. "To the Lord our God *belong* mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; <sup>10</sup> Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets."**

In this season of prevailing prayer, we must confess the glory of God and the rebellion of man. We must also confess the awful consequences of our rebellion against God. From the very beginning, humans have been great "blame-shifters." When called into account for his actions, Adam blamed Eve and God. He said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me . . ." – blaming his wife and God in a single breath.

So from the beginning, men have had to carefully sort out what belongs to whom. Daniel's prayer shows us how to sort this out carefully in the sight of God. He introduced this with the words, **"O Lord."** You and I would be wise sort out "our belongings" in the sight of Lord also.

As Daniel sifted through the history of Israel, he drew the following conclusions:

### ***Belongings***

#### **Belongs to the Lord**

*Righteousness, v.7a*

*Mercies, v.9*

*Forgiveness, v.9*

#### **Belongs to Us**

*Shame, v.7a*

*Trespases, v.7c*

*Shame, v.8*

*Sins against God, v.8b*

*Rebellion, v.9*

*Disobedience, v.10*

**“O Lord, righteousness belongs unto Thee”** – The right ways, the straight ways, belong to the Lord. But as we have learned, the ways of man miss the mark of God’s righteousness. Our ways are perverse, twisted and deliberately evil. When we comprehend God’s righteousness, we can rightly confess our rebellion. In verse 18, Daniel made it clear that no one can appeal to God on the basis of human righteousness.

#### **“But unto us, confusion [shame] of faces” vs.7, 8**

Shame and the blushed face of confusion belongs to man. Those who are honest know that their disobedience has led to disgrace. Those who would pray honestly in the sight of God must admit this is true. It is true of each person and it is true of our nation.

The true intercessor will admit that it is “us” not “they” who are guilty. Daniel knew the history of Israel, and he knew his

*When we comprehend God’s  
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confess our rebellion.*

“own” our nation’s sins as intercessors before God.

The “us” included all the Jewish people who were former inhabitants of Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem (v.7); it included all those captives who had been driven to faraway lands. The “us” included the kings, princes and fathers of the people. Many scholars believe that Daniel was of royal blood. If so, he included his own family in this shameful description.

#### **Because of their trespases, v.7**

The word “trespass” here refers to the treacherous transgressions of the people. This is what had brought about their national disgrace. Daniel confessed that all of this belonged to his nation. They were not like the idolaters of the nations. They had once served the Living and True God. Yet they had trespassed against Him and saw their once great fame turned to bondage and shame.

#### **Because we have sinned and disobeyed, v.8, 10**

Daniel repeated this confession, this time for all the leaders of the nation. They had all sinned against God and seen their land decimated in disgrace. And on the way down that long dusty road to disgrace, they had ignored the appeals from the Lord’s prophets: **“Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God.”**

So was there any hope? Yes, for one reason:

**“To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses” v.9**

**“Though we rebelled against Him,”** Daniel confessed, **“to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses.”** As the psalmist wrote, **“If thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But *there is* forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope”** (Psalm 130:3-5).

If it were not for the Lord’s forgiveness and His tender mercies, there would be no hope. This is why the psalmist continued in 130:7, **“Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD *there is* mercy, and with Him *is* plenteous redemption.”**

Only the Lord Himself could redeem His people. And the Lord did pay the price for redemption by giving His life on the cross of Calvary. This is why we have hope. It is in the Lord alone and no other. **“Christ in you, the hope of glory”** (Colossians 1:27). Let us make our appeals through Him in this season of prevailing prayer.

## **God Says What He Means**

Daniel 9:11-12

**<sup>11</sup> Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that *is* written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. <sup>12</sup> And he hath confirmed his words, which he spoke against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem.”**

In this season of prevailing prayer, we must tell the truth about our Sovereign God and our grievous sin. Daniel shows us how.

We could organize the themes of Scripture around the acronym G.R.A.C.E. The Bible is **“the Word of His grace”** (Acts 20:32). The Good News of Christ is **“the Gospel of the grace of God”** (Acts 20:24). The Gospel and God’s Word are about

- G: The Glory of God
- R: The Rebellion of mankind
- A: The Awful Penalty for that rebellion
- C: The Christ who paid the penalty for man’s rebellion
- E: Embracing Christ by faith today

Daniel’s earnest prayer reflects these important themes. In verses 11-12, the prophet stressed the rebellion of his people and the awful consequences of that rebellion.

- Rebellion: Daniel confessed that all Israel had transgressed against the Law of God. They had refused to hear the voice of the Living God.

- The Awful Penalty for Rebellion: The man of God confessed that his nation had been cursed, and that they deserved that curse. God had promised this in the remarkable chapter on the blessings and curses of a nation in Deuteronomy 28. So Daniel agreed with God about his nation's sin. If we are to prevail in prayer, we must do the same. God said what He meant and He meant what He said. God had confirmed His words by bringing great evil upon the country.

Stop to consider the remarkable statement at the end of verse 12: **“For under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem.”** This nation had enjoyed the lavish blessings of the Living God. They were not like the nations whose gods were idols of stone and wood. Yet from that great, exalted height they had fallen into utter disgrace. This is a reminder for all nations.

Throughout this prayer, Daniel focused on the nation of Israel. We would be wise to prevail in prayer for our own nation as well, for there is great danger. Psalm 9:17 reminds us, **“The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.”** God

*God said what He meant and He meant what He said.*

will show His wonders to the proud nations, according to prophet Micah: **“The nations**

**shall see and be confounded . . .”** (Micah 7:16).

Throughout this prayer, Daniel's approach illustrates the words of Psalm 62:8: **“Trust in Him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before Him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.”**

Daniel trusted in the Lord **“at all times,”** – even when his nation was under God's devastating judgment. He trusted God enough to

seek Him with passionate prayer. Yes, he knew what the Lord had promised through the prophet, Jeremiah. Yes, he knew that the Sovereign God would soon fulfill His prophecy to return Israel to the land. But Daniel wanted to see his people return to the Lord first and then to the land.

So what did he do? He poured out his heart before the Lord. You can also follow the psalmist's admonition: **“pour out your heart before the Lord.”** No

matter what is in your heart, you will find that you can

**“Trust in Him at all times.”** Is your heart

full of bitterness or lust? Pour it out before Him. It is haunted by heartache and hurt? Pour it out before Him. Pride and piety, grief and grace, anger and affection are all alike in this respect. You ought to pour them all out before the Lord. And you will find that **“God is a refuge for us.”**

*He trusted God enough to seek Him with passionate prayer.*

May this be your season of prevailing prayer.

## What Are We Missing?

Daniel 9:13-16

**“As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. <sup>14</sup> Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice. <sup>15</sup> And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. <sup>16</sup> 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.”**

### **The Significant Power of Prayer, 13**

By faith, Daniel latched on to the prevailing power of prayer for his people. He knew that God had said what He meant, and meant what He said. But Daniel knew that Deuteronomy 28 (in the Law of Moses) included blessings as well as curses. Seize hold of this in this season of prevailing prayer.

If you know that your nation is under God’s curse, what should you do? Consider these words carefully: **“all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.”** What Daniel found remarkable was **“yet we made not our prayer.”** This raises a question for every one of us. Just how bad do things need to get before we make our prayer? Why would we not enter into a season of

prevailing prayer right away? Here are the powerful effects of praying for God's favor, according to Daniel 9:13:

- Prayer is associated with a nation turning from its iniquities.

Prayerlessness leaves us with no answer for godlessness. But stirring ourselves to take hold of God (Isaiah 64:6-7) is God's means for turning a nation back to God.

- Prayer is connected with a nation's understanding of the truth.

Do the people in your country act like animal brutes? Pray! Pray with Daniel that they would understand God's Truth. Like Nebuchadnezzar, they may be recovered from their brutish ways.

### The Significant Absence of Prayer, 14

The prominence of prayer can be seen by its absence. Because **"we made not our prayer,"** . . . **"Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil and brought it upon us:"** Where there is no praying intercessor, God's righteousness wreaks havoc on the rebels. Will you not pray that they may turn and understand?

### The Significant History of Prayer, 15

Verse 15 begins with the direct address, **"O Lord."** It is at this point that his prayer begins to build to climax. Daniel made a direct, personal appeal. In this season of prevailing prayer, you must do the same. In chapter 9, verse 23, the prophet was reminded that he was **"greatly beloved."** This applies to New Testament believers as well. **"To the praise of the glory of His grace"** God had made us to be **"accepted in the Beloved"**

(Ephesians 1:6). We have every right to make our direct, personal appeals in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The prophet began by reminding the Lord of His renowned work among His people in Egypt. He did so while still admitting the sinful wickedness of his people. This is quite a contrast, but it draws upon the essential nature of prevailing prayer. We cannot make our appeals based on our self-righteousness nor our stubborn rebellion. But every one of us can make our prayer to God for the fame of His great name. It is only because He is the renowned Redeemer that He will hear and answer our prayers. By praying in this manner, we turn our Biblical knowledge about God

*It is only because He is the renowned Redeemer that He will hear and answer our prayers.*

into blessed fellowship with God.

The Book of Exodus records

the urgent prayers of the captives in Egypt: **" . . . the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them"** (Exodus 2:23-25) Daniel knew the significant history of Israel's prayer. When God's people in Egypt cried out from their bondage, the Lord heard them and sent a deliverer. Daniel asked the Lord to do the same great work in his day.

### The Significant Approach to Prayer, 16

In this season of prevailing prayer, how should you pray for your nation? It is certainly not on the basis of our national pride, nor

our sinless record. How should we make our appeal? Verse 16 gives us the answer:

**“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.”**

We can only appeal to our Redeemer on the basis of His righteous and just actions. Daniel knew that his nation’s punishment was richly deserved. The nation that had once been a world power had been reduced to ruin. He exalted God’s righteous ways and confessed his nation’s wretched rebellion.

Though Daniel’s prayer addressed the history of Israel and Jerusalem, it is still relevant today. We can see this from the way that God answered this prayer. God’s answer was the announcement of Messiah the Prince! In Him shall all the nations of the earth be blessed (Galatians 3:8). Since Christ has come, we have even an even greater privilege to pray for our country.

Think again about Daniel’s confession: **“Yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand Thy truth.”** Daniel made his appeal because he understood the significant, powerful history of prayer. He grieved over the missing element of prayer, and resolved to make his direct, personal approach to God. In this season of prevailing prayer, you and I must do the same.

## The Prayer of God’s Servant

Daniel 9:17-19

**“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 Lord’s sake. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> 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.”**

Daniel’s season of prevailing prayer reached its climax with these words. Here, Daniel did not identify himself as God’s prophet, but as God’s servant. We can present our petitions in the same spirit.

Why is God moving you to pray in these days? On one occasion, George Mueller was asked about his unanswered prayer for his two friends. God had answered so many of his prayers in such remarkable ways that people asked him about the unanswered ones. They wondered aloud if Mueller should not accept that fact that God’s answer was “no.” Mueller’s response is instructive. He asked, “Why would God have moved me to pray if he did not intend to answer?” His two friends trusted Christ shortly before and after Mueller’s death. Why is God moving you to pray in these days? He may be doing so in order to give you His glorious answer!

### The Source of Prevailing Prayer, 17-18

Daniel prayed for God’s favor on Jerusalem, for the Lord’s sake. Now remember, he had already grasped the Biblical prophecy in Jeremiah 29:10. But he used this remarkable prophecy to pray for

revival among his people. Then, Daniel made his appeal, not on the basis of self-righteousness, but on the basis of God's mercies.

### **The Urgency of Prevailing Prayer, 17-19**

Daniel's personal, heartfelt prayer in chapter 9 climaxes in a series of staccato bursts. You can almost feel the urgency of a man earnestly weeping over his country. He had approached the Lord in the right way, and now, like Jacob, he was determined to wrestle with God. Listen to his appeals and use them in your own praying:

- "Hear the prayer of Your servant"
- "Cause Your face to shine" upon us
- "For the Lord's sake"
- "Incline Your ear and hear"
- "Open Your eyes and behold" our devastation
- "O Lord, hear"
- "O Lord, forgive"
- "O Lord, listen and do"
- "For your own sake, do not delay"
- "We are called by Your name"

May God grant you the same urgency in this season of prevailing prayer.

## Appendix 1

### How to Spend an Hour in Prayer

Do you feel that you cannot pray because you run out of things to say? One of the most practical ways to solve this problem is to combine Biblical meditation with prayer. Here are some practical steps to do this:

- Write down a prayer list of people or needs for which you need to pray. You might use the church directory or a list of our missionaries.
- Pray the prayer of Psalm 119:18, **“Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy Law.”**
- Then, read through a passage of Scripture in a slow, deliberative manner. As you do, notice what is pleasing to God. Look for a way to exalt His name or search for a promise to claim. Find a sin to confess or an example to follow. When you find a striking phrase that captures your attention, stop to think about it. Meditate (concentrate) on it. You may find more than one such verse. Each one can become powerful fuel for faithful prayer.
- Then, with your Bible open and your eyes open, begin to pray, concentrating on a verse you have just read.
- Begin to pray for the first person on your prayer list using that striking verse or phrase.
- Be prepared to understand a new aspect of that verse as you apply it, and continue to pray for others on your list.
- When you are ready to do so, use another verse from that passage you pondered. Remember that God is glorified as you show such concern for His Word that you would pray

it back to Him. This results in a wonderful time of fellowship and conversation with the Lord.

- Don't be surprised at how quickly the time passes when you use this method. Once you have that verse in mind, you can pray during your daily commute, while running errands, or doing household chores.
- In each case, you will find what you carefully pondered becomes powerful fuel for faithful prayer.

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## Appendix 2

### When You Fast

In the Scriptures, seasons of prevailing prayer frequently include fasting. People fast for different reasons, including their health. In this brief study, “fasting” means deliberately abstaining from food or certain types of food for spiritual purposes.

Fasting can take many forms. It's important that you talk to your doctor about this if you are under his care.

#### In Times of Intense Prayer for Urgent Needs

In the Old Testament, times of earnest prayer were frequently accompanied by fasting.

- David fasted and prayed for the life of his dying child (2 Samuel 12:21-23).
- When his nation was threatened, Jehoshaphat **“set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah”** (2 Chronicles 20:3).
- Ezra proclaimed a fast **“that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to see of Him a right way for us . . .”** (Ezra 8:21).

- In a season of prevailing prayer, Daniel wrote, **“I set my face unto the Lord God, to see by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth and ashes:”** (Daniel 9:3).
- In another season of prevailing prayer, Daniel explained this in Daniel 10:2-3. **“In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh or wine into my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.”**

From the statement of Ezra, we learn that fasting is a way to **“afflict ourselves before God.”** Hunger reminds us of our absolute dependence on the Lord. We can easily forget this in a “self-serve world” where grocery stores are open 24 hours a day. But when Jesus was tempted by the devil to serve Himself (Matthew 4:3-4), He responded with a quote from Deuteronomy 8:3. **“And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.”** It is obvious that fasting produces hunger. Here is what may not be as obvious. Afflicting our souls in this manner reminds us of our absolute dependence upon God.

Some would respond to these passages with a simple argument: fasting is only for Old Testament saints. On the contrary, fasting is mentioned in a positive context more than ten times in the New Testament.

**Jesus fasted.** (Matthew 4:2) This was at the beginning of his public ministry of the Word.

**Jesus assumed that His followers would fast.** (Matthew 6:1-18)

Christ’s *Sermon on the Mount* sheds light on the matter of fasting. He assumed that His followers would give in a benevolent fashion (6:1-4). Jesus also assumed that His true followers would pray (6:5-15). Jesus Christ made the same assumption about fasting (6:16-18). In Matthew 6:17, He did not say, “If you fast,” but **“when you fast.”**

**Jesus stated that His followers would fast.** (Matthew 9:14-15, Mark 2:18-20, Luke 5:33-35). When He was confronted about this question by the disciples of John, Jesus explained. **“Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.”** Everyone agrees that **“when the Bridegroom shall be taken”** was a reference to Christ’s ascension. Jesus said that after His ascension, “they shall fast.” But His statement also explains why Christ’s followers will fast. When He was physically present, they did not fast. But in His absence, they would fast. Why? Fasting is a means by which we can guide our hearts to yearn for the presence of Christ. In the words of Habakkuk 2:3, it is a way to “wait for it” (to wait for the Lord’s return to earth).

New Testament fasting has a different focus than Old Testament fasting. This is evident from Matthew 9:16-17. In the New Testament, we are not longing for the coming of the Messiah. We know that He has already come to earth. Our yearning is for His Second Coming.

**Jesus instructed His followers to add fasting to prayer for urgently needed spiritual power** (Mark 9:26-29). Think of His reply when His disciples asked why they could not cast a demon out of a possessed boy: **“And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.”**

**The Apostle Paul indicated that believers would participate in seasons of fasting and prayer** (1 Corinthians 7:5).

### **Why Should We Fast**

From the examples above, the answer is clear. It is to humble ourselves before God, admitting our absolute dependence upon Him. In the history of our country, nationwide fasts have been proclaimed in times of trouble. We have desperately needed God in our past, and we most assuredly need Him at the present time.

### **How Should We Fast?**

**It is a matter of personal choice.**

There are no hard and fast regulations in the New Testament concerning fasting. It appears that believers used it in seasons of prevailing prayer, as they chose. Both the timing and the duration are a matter for each believer to choose. But remember that Jesus said, **“When you fast,”** and **“they will fast.”**

It may be that you choose to abstain from food to continually remember your dependence upon God. It may be that you would set aside certain kinds of food (as Daniel did in Daniel 10:2-3). He probably did this to set aside what we might call “the entertainment value of food.” Daniel knew that he needed to eat to live. He just wanted to be sure that he was not living to eat.

**It is associated with seasons of prevailing prayer.**

There is no great value attached to fasting by itself. It is not a means of grace. But when it is added to urgent times of searching the Word and praying, it is a helpful approach for one to **“stay upon His God”** (Isaiah 50:10).

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<sup>i</sup> A.B. Simpsons, “A Larger Christian Life” (Chapter 6, “More Than Conquerors”

<sup>ii</sup> Charles E. McClain, “Daniel’s Prayer in Chapter 9,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal*, Volume 09:1 (Fall 2004) p.266

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid. citing James Montgomery Boice, *Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), pp. 103-4.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid. citing a quote from Paul D. Feinberg, “An Exegetical and Theological Study of Daniel 9:24–27,” in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg*, ed. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), p. 189.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid. p. 267

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid. p. 269

<sup>vii</sup> Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, vol. 18, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 243.