

## **GOING WITH GOD**

### **Sermon Nine**

#### **PRAYER GOD ANSWERS**

##### **Daniel 9**

As we have journeyed with Daniel through this amazing book we have discovered many things about Daniel. He was a man of great courage, a man who followed God closely and was obedient to all that God instructed him to do. But perhaps the most outstanding feature and characteristic of this mans life, was that he was a great man of prayer. In Daniel 6:10 we are told of Daniel, “Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before”. The key to Daniel’s blessing and success was that he was a man of prayer. At the beginning of chapter nine Daniel is reading through the book of the prophet Jeremiah and God reveals to him that the exile of the people will last for

seventy years. Daniel is cut to the heart out of compassion for the people and turns to God and offers to Him a prayer for both himself and for his people. At the end of his prayer from verse 20 Daniel notes, “While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the Lord my God for his holy hill – while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. He instructed me and said to me, Daniel I have now come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given....”. As soon as Daniel began praying an answer was given! Is this not the kind of prayer that you and I would like to pray that as we begin to pray an answer comes?

This morning I want us to consider Daniel's model for prayer that we can use in our own prayer times and discover the secret of answered prayer.

### **1. ATTITUDE OF HUMILITY vs 3**

The secret of effective prayer begins even before we even pray and it begins by coming to prayer with an attitude of great humility. In verse 3 we are told that Daniel puts on sackcloth and ashes as a sign of mourning but more importantly displaying a great attitude of humility. Daniel acknowledges his and the peoples worthlessness in coming before God in prayer acknowledging that they deserve nothing more than judgement from Him. Pride is one of the greatest obstacles to God answering our prayers whereas the heart of God is touched by a humble sinner who throws himself upon the mercy of God. Here I am

reminded of the story Jesus told of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:10-14,

“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself, God I thank you that I am not like all other men – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get. But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, God, have mercy on me, a sinner. I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted”. We have seen throughout this book that it is God who brings down the proud and exalts the humble. When we come humbly to the Lord in prayer he will exalt us and answer our prayers.

## **2. WORSHIP vs 4**

Rather than rushing into our prayer time with our shopping list of requests, we need to begin by taking time to worship the Lord by focussing on his divine attributes. Out of our humility we are able to worship Him. Note how Daniel does this in verse 4, “great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him...” He reminds himself of and celebrates both God’s power and greatness but also his unconditional love. When we worship in this way we are encouraged to pray boldly to God who is able to do the impossible. When we focus on the greatness of God our burdens and problems don’t seem so great. When Jesus taught His disciples to pray the Lords prayer in Matt 6 he teaches to begin with worship, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name...”. I have found that as I resist the temptation to rush to the prayer shopping list and spend time just worshipping the Lord in

prayer, there is always a greater sense of connectedness and an experience that my prayers are entering into the very throne room of heaven.

## **3. CONFESSION vs’s 5-15**

Flowing out of our worship and a deep sense of our unworthiness, we need to move into a time of confession of our own sin and the sin of those we are interceding for. This is a prominent element of Daniel’s prayer. In his confession he makes a general confession in verse 5 about having sinned and done wrong. Later on he goes on to mention more specific sins that God had convicted him of. “We have not listened to your servants the prophets....we have not obeyed the Lord our God or kept the laws he gave us. Sometimes it is very easy to pray general prayers of confession whereas the Lord desires us to be specific confessing the specific sins that he has convicted us of.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Forgive us our debts...” Perhaps one of the greatest prayers of confession ever offered was made King David after he had been convicted of his sin with Bathsheba and in Psalm 51:3, “For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...” David knew his sin and named them specifically as he confessed them. One of the greatest promises of all Scripture is found in 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”. What a wonderful promise of blessing for those who confess their sin.

#### **4. ASK FOR MERCY vs’s 16-19**

Daniel had an acute understanding that even as he confessed his sin and that of the people, even so there was

nothing that compelled God to forgive except his great compassion and mercy. In verse 9 in his worship of God he sets the scene by proclaiming “The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against Him” and on the basis of this he prays for the mercy of God in verse 18, “We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy”. David understood his need of God’s mercy as he prayed in Psalm 51:1, “Have mercy on me O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions”. If it were not for God’s grace and mercy none of us could stand.

#### **5. INTERCESSION**

Notice very interestingly that the act of intercession only comes fifth and that there are at least four things that we need to do before we come to the Lord with our requests,

an attitude of humility, worship, confession, asking for the mercy of God and then only intercession. This is well illustrated by how Daniel introduces his intercession in verse 17 with the words, “Now our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant”. What is Daniel saying here? Simply this. Now God having come with a humble heart, having worshipped you, confessed my sin and called upon your mercy, now hear my prayer. Daniel then goes on to intercede for both himself and his people and God answers his prayer.

## **CONCLUSION**

The prayer God answers is the prayer that is offered out of a heart of humility. It begins with focussing on and worshipping the greatness of God. This flows into a time of confession and asking God for his great mercy. Only then can we say with Daniel “Now our God hear the

prayers and the petitions of your servant”. As we pray in this way, maybe we like Daniel will know that our prayers are answered even as we begin to pray.