

Daniel's Prayer For His Country

April 3, 2011

PSL: Prayer As A Second Language- Part 4

INTRODUCTION:

We are at a critical time in our nation's history...Congress is embroiled in a budget crisis...We're still at war...the lives of thousands of America's finest are on the line today in foreign lands. Unemployment rates in our country and OH are still high—around 9%. Tensions in the Middle East continue to rise...foreign policy challenges are abundant. Add to all of this is the NFL's labor issues and OSU's problems with the NCAA... ☺.

A lot of the debate in our country is framed as conservative vs. liberal or Democrat vs. Republican or right-wing vs. left-wing. Yet, I think we are missing the real issue...and the fact that we're missing the real issue is why we are spending today looking at how Daniel got to the real issue.

The key issue facing America today is not the economy or unrest in the Middle East or any other foreign or domestic problem... it is that God is increasingly being removed from the public conversation. Our country is becoming increasingly secular. Even though something that is really important to us (OUR MONEY) says "in God we trust" or "We trust in God"... "God" is being increasingly removed from the public sector and conversation. And, when we no longer want to honor God, think about Him, or speak about Him... then we forget we are accountable to Him. When that happens...when we forget we are accountable to God for our actions...*We don't just have problems on a national level... things break down on a societal level.* More than ever before...it seems like marriages are struggling. More than ever before we're buying things we can't afford. Materialism is eating us alive.

Today were going to at a solution to our nation's illness. *So what is it going to take to turn things around? What would it take to heal our land?*

Well, there were people in the Bible that were concerned for their nation as well. And, what they did, first and foremost is exactly what we need to do for America. They prayed. Last week, we looked at a powerful prayer from Nehemiah to God for his country. This week, I want to read a prayer from Daniel to God for his people. Daniel, like Nehemiah, stood in the gap for his nation. He saw things that weren't right, he took responsibility, and he prayed to God and asked for help.

READ Daniel 9.

Daniel models three principles we must also live to see change in America.

What is it that will heal America and what is it that will heal us? We have to do three things.

1. We must learn humility.

Daniel 9:17:

¹⁷ *"O our God, **hear your servant's prayer!** Listen as I plead. For your own sake, Lord, smile again on your desolate sanctuary.*

Daniel put himself in the place of a servant...a slave of God. A person ready to do whatever God asked. He wasn't full of himself—he was full of passion for God and His work.

All of our problems start with pride- thinking that we know what is better for us than God does. But, the Bible says this in James 4:6 (NIV) *"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."* We need to develop humility.

- **For you and me: we can find humility through confession.** I confess how my words or thoughts or actions fall short of God's glory. Confession helps me see myself in proper relation to God. Apart from Jesus, I fall short of God's righteousness. I need God's mercy. The Bible says this in **Proverbs 28:13** (New Living Translation) *People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy.*

There is a book by G.K.Chesterton. The title of the book is What's Wrong with the World. It came from an opportunity a hundred years ago when a newspaper in London invited people to write in the answer to this question: *What's wrong with the world?* The great intellectual G.K. Chesterton sent in his response to the question, *What's wrong with the world?* With a two-word answer: "I am." I am what's wrong with the world—that's humility. We saw this kind of humility in Nehemiah. Now we see it in Daniel.

What will heal America? Health would take place in America if God's people...united...would *humble themselves...individuals find humility through confession.*

- **For America... Godly people must stand up and confess corporate sin.**

Over and over again in Daniel 9, we see Daniel owning his own sin and the sin of his country. As we've studied prayer these, now, four weeks, I have been absolutely impacted by the necessity of dealing with sin in order to have an effective prayer life. Daniel confessed his own sin...but he also confessed corporate sin.

Daniel 9:5-6a.:

⁵ *But we have sinned and done wrong. We have rebelled against you and scorned your commands and regulations.* ⁶ *We have refused to listen to your servants the prophets*

Daniel shows us that there is more than one kind of confession. This is a new way of thinking for many of us. Personal confession is important. We spent a whole message talking about that two weeks ago when we looked at *David's Prayer Of Repentance* as a model for seeking God's forgiveness and renewal daily.

But, Daniel teaches us there is also national confession. *We don't think enough about national confession.* This is something we rarely hear in any church setting. As Americans, we are so individualistic, that we don't have any corporate sense of responsibility. *We're taught to confess my sins. When was the last time you confessed the sins of the nation? or the sins of your family? or your church? or your friends?* Daniel says, "Not only do I have personal sin to confess but I have corporate sin. God, I know you have been displeased with me and my people...and I want to ask for forgiveness for all of us." **That's a leader. That's someone that understands God's heart.** That's someone that is uttering a powerful prayer.

America needs people that will do the same. America needs people that will simply say, *God we have sinned. We are going against your principles in many areas... in ethical and moral issues, in the disintegration of our culture, in our collective lack of concern for poor and suffering around the world, in our obsession with money and stuff, in our innate ability to put work and stuff and pleasure and any number of other things BEFORE you...God, I'm sorry for America...please forgive us. Convict us...lead us back to your plan.*

2. We must pray.

Much of Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9 is 1) recognizing who God is... His holiness, His righteousness, His justice, His mercy... it is ascribing God His rightful place....it is worship and 2) recognizing man's place in comparison...sinners. Daniel confessed his sin and the sins of his countrymen.

Then, Daniel prays. He prays for his country. The text doesn't go into a lot of specifics... but it is easy to see the passion Daniel had as he asked God to have mercy on his country (vv.17-19):

¹⁷ "O our God, hear your servant's prayer! Listen as I plead. For your own sake, Lord, smile again on your desolate sanctuary. ¹⁸ "O my God, lean down and listen to me. Open your eyes and see our despair. See how your city—the city that bears your name—lies in ruins. We make this plea, not because we deserve help, but because of your mercy. ¹⁹ "O Lord, hear. O Lord, forgive. O Lord, listen and act! For your own sake, do not delay, O my God, for your people and your city bear your name."

What if we prayed for America with that same passion!

Almost three thousand years ago exactly – about 980 BC – God made a promise to a king named Solomon. That promise is not only to Solomon it is to all of God’s people.

God says this in **2 Chronicles 7:14: (NIV)**

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

That’s what would heal America. God is talking to anyone that knows Him. If you know Jesus, God says, *I’m going to tell you what will lead to healing in your life, in your marriage, in your finances...In America!*

Where do you need healing? Where do you need restoration? In your finances? In your relationships? At your job? Your neighborhood? Where does America need healing? Need restoration? Humble yourself...pray...seek God’s face...and turn from wicked ways...and God will heal!

If we want healing in our lives, our marriages, our finances, or our nation or anything else...We must pray with tenacity. *“If my people will pray.”*

What do we pray for our nation? For ourselves?

- **Pray for Forgiveness.**

- **Pray for WISDOM. We need ANSWERS.**

I was watching an interview between President Obama and NBC’s Brian Williams this week. As I was watching, I was convicted- I don’t pray for our President enough! No matter whether you agree with his politics or not...think about the kind of job he has. He is facing huge problems. They’re all over the news...all kinds of economic, domestic, national security, and foreign relations issues. Big questions...complicated questions... with large ramifications.

*Where are we going to get answers? Where are we looking for answers? Politicians? Professors? History? Democratic/Republican “strategists”? Why would we expect that any of these sources would have the wisdom we’re looking for? They’ve never been in these kinds of situations before because I’m not sure any nation in the history of the world has ever faced the kind of issues America is facing today. **We need real wisdom...Where is this found?***

Where do you get answers? Do you have problems or questions or hurts that you just have no idea how to address? Maybe you are in the midst of a faith battle right now...you’re not sure how to proceed...what do you do?

The Bible tells us where to find answers to every problem...

Proverbs 1:7: *Fear of the Lord is the foundation of true knowledge...*

What does it mean to “fear the Lord”? This is not fear like you feel when you see how unstable your job is...or you’re facing a difficult health challenge...or you are wondering how your kid is going to turn out...

READ DESCRIPTION IN NLT STUDY BIBLE, pg. 1030

- **Pray for Help**
Psalm 70 (New Living Translation)

*1 Please, God, rescue me!
Come quickly, Lord, and help me.
4 But may all who search for you
be filled with joy and gladness in you.
May those who love your salvation
repeatedly shout, “God is great!”
5 But as for me, I am poor and needy;
please hurry to my aid, O God.
You are my helper and my savior;
O Lord, do not delay.*

- **What if we prayed this prayer for America?**
- **What is we initiated...led others in praying this prayer?**

- **Pray for Leaders**
1 Timothy 2:1-4

1 I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. 2 Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. 3 This is good and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth.

God says you need to pray for leaders, not just political leaders. You need to pray for community leaders. You need to pray for church leaders, pray for me. You need to pray for academic leaders, business leaders, leaders in every area of life. Anybody who is in authority. It means CEO's. It means presidents. It means bosses. It means supervisors. It means your manager. It means anybody who's been elected. We are to pray for kings.] *and all those in authority.”*

1. Why are we to pray for those in authority over us? Here are the three reasons. **The first reason he says is “...that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in godliness and holiness.”**

God says *when you pray for wisdom for your leaders and I give that leader wisdom it's going to be a whole lot better for you.*

Peace is going to trickle down. When you pray for those who are leading you it's going to be good for you. So you're actually praying for yourself when you do that. He said you'll be able to lead peaceful and quiet lives.

2. Then he says the second reason. He says *"This is good and it pleases God our Savior."* Did you know that when you pray for leaders you please God? God smiles. God says, *"That's my boy! That's my girl! You're doing what I told you to do. I told you to pray for leaders and that is pleasing to me."* Whether you voted for them or not you are to pray for the leaders in every area of society. God says that pleases me.
3. Here's the third reason: our Savior who wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. **The third reason is it promotes evangelism.** God's word gets shared better. He says, when you pray for leaders in your country and in other countries what happens is it makes it easier for the good news to be shared. And I want everybody to come to Christ. I want everybody to know my love. So he says God wants all men to be saved.

Let me ask you a really serious question. *How serious are you about prayer?* You're as close to God as you want to be. It's your choice. How serious are you about becoming more mature spiritually? It's your choice. But you've got to pray with tenacity.

Colossians 4:2 (NLT) says *Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart.* I love it in the Amplified translation, it gives the full meaning. *"Be earnest and unwearied and steadfast in your prayers.*

Ephesians 6:18 (New Living Translation) *Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.*

I find it interesting that both of these verses stress *being alert.* Why is that so important? Maybe because God looked down through history and saw the Church in America in 2009 with *dead...sluggish...anemic...boring...irregular...shallow...selfish...* prayer lives. We need this alertness in our prayer life.

3. We Must Seek God

Psalm 14

1 Only fools say in their hearts,

"There is no God."

*They are corrupt, and their actions are evil;
not one of them does good!*

2 The Lord looks down from heaven
on the entire human race;
he looks to see if anyone is truly wise,
if anyone seeks God.

3 But no, all have turned away;
all have become corrupt.[a]
No one does good,
not a single one!

What does it mean to “seek God”?

- It means that when we get up in the morning we look for Him first.
- It means God...talking to Him...His Word...His heart is foremost in our thoughts during the day. *How do you know what you are seeking—it’s what you think about most during the day.*
- It means that every decision is run by Him in prayer. You look for His wisdom on an issue. You make decisions by running them through a filter of what the Bible says.
- It means that I have a regular discipline of reading the Bible...being fed by it...and connecting intimately with God through prayer.
- It means that the driving force of my heart is to please God...not me.

2 Chronicles 16:9 (New Living Translation)

The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

“God rewards those who earnestly seek him.” Heb. 11:6b (NIV)

“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Matt. 6:33 (NIV)

“If you seek the Lord your God, you will find him IF you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, you will return to the Lord your God and obey him. For He is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you...” Deut. 4:29-31a (NIV)

This Week’s ClearView Challenge:

- Spend 15-30 minutes reading the Scriptures and praying each area of point 2 (above).
- Pray for forgiveness for America.
- Pray for wisdom for American people and leaders.
- Pray for help for America.
- Pray for leaders that affect your life- church, business, regional, national...
- Share your experience with someone else.