



# Prayer Is The Work

BY APRIL TUMMINS

“Within the past year, there’s been a mass shooting every week somewhere in the United States.”

This headline came across the television screen as I watched the evening news. Sadly, I wasn’t shocked. It was yet more evidence of our nation drifting rapidly from the Lord, His Word, and the wholeness of a godly life that comes from living close to Him.

Just as a diamond radiates against a dark cloth, the black backdrop of our ever-darkening culture allows us to shine brilliantly for Christ. It is time for men and women of God to rise up by bending their knees in prayer before God for the revival of our nation. When we do, we can powerfully illuminate our streets with the light of Christ to every nation, tribe, people, and language here and around the world—one heart, one home, and one church at a time.

*Prayer is the work.* But where do we begin? Daniel’s prayer in Daniel chapter nine will serve as our prayer guide. To help us focus and reflect, we will read one section of the prayer at a time.

## Daniel’s Humility: Preparation of the Heart Before God

*Daniel set his face toward God. He prayed, fasted, and mourned in sackcloth and ashes (Daniel 9:3).*

Daniel’s heart was broken for his nation. Due to Israel’s rebellious and wicked ways, God’s foretold judgment and wrath fell on them. Their temple had been destroyed, and they were placed in Babylonian captivity for nearly 70 years.

According to Daniel 6:10, Daniel had a practice of praying three times a day toward Jerusalem. His reading of the Scripture inspired his habit. He regularly prayed toward the Jerusalem temple just as Solomon had instructed future exiles to pray (1 Kings 8:48).

Daniel’s prayer was prompted by reading God’s

Word. Daniel had been reading “the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah” (Daniel 9:2), and he was pondering the prophecies found there.

What were the prophecies listed in these Scriptures?

Jeremiah 25:1

Jeremiah 29:10

The end of seventy years of captivity was quickly approaching. The prophecy of God’s judgment upon Babylon was unfolding. The Medes and Persians had overthrown Babylon, and Darius, the new ruler, killed King Belshazzar. Just as He had promised, God’s judgment was now on Babylon and his nation. With the time of captivity ending, Daniel was moved to pray for the fulfillment of the second part of the prophecy—Israel’s restoration.

## Daniel’s Acknowledgement of Who God Is

*“O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments...” (Daniel 9:4).*

Daniel began his prayer by confessing God’s promise found in Deuteronomy 7:9. What characteristics of God did he list in His prayer?

What is God’s promise in this Scripture?

## Daniel’s Confession of Sin

After offering up praise for God’s character, Daniel then pours out his confession of sins, both personal and national:

*“We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land” (Daniel 9:5-6).*

According to this verse, what had Israel done to deserve judgment?

Why did Daniel say, “we” have sinned?

How does this admission of sin compare with that of the Pharisee and publican in Luke 18:9?

What does Proverbs 14:34 say about national sin?

What are some personal and national sins that you can confess in prayer right now?

### **Daniel’s Acknowledgement that Consequences are Deserved**

*“O Lord, righteousness belongeth 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. (Daniel 9:7-8).*

According to these verses, what belongs to God?

What does Daniel confess belongs to Israel and why?

### **Daniel’s Plea for God’s Mercy**

Confession and repentance of sin is the first step to spiritual healing, individually and corporately.

*“To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; 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. 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” (Daniel 9:9-11).*

Here, Daniel was referencing the curses for disobedience to God in the law of Moses recorded in Deuteronomy 28:15-19. According to these verses in Deuteronomy, where would the curses be realized?



### **Daniel’s Confession of Foreknowledge of Consequences for Disobedience**

*“And He hath confirmed his words, which he spake 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. 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. 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” (Daniel 9:12-14).*

Read Psalm 51:17 and 1 John 1:9.

When our sin is acknowledged and confessed before God, what hope do we find?



*God is liberator.  
God is mighty to save.*

### Daniel’s Confession of God’s Omnipotence and Ability to Deliver

*“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” (Daniel 9:15).*

God is a liberator. Daniel acknowledges that God is mighty to save and that His people are the ones who failed Him. We may not have been delivered from Egyptian bondage, but we, as Christ-followers, were once enslaved and have been delivered from sin’s penalty by God’s power through Christ.

Read Galatians 5:13-14 and answer these questions:

How should we use our freedom?

By what is the entire law fulfilled?

As this relates to prayer, how can we serve and love our neighbors and nations around us?

### Daniel’s Plea for God to Turn Away His Anger

*“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 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“ (Daniel 9:16-17).*

For whose sake is Daniel requesting God’s intervention?

Read Lamentations 3:22-25. What hope do we find in these Scriptures relating to our sin personally and corporately?

We are commissioned to go to all the world and preach the gospel (Matthew 28:19). As we pray, ask God to relent of His wrath on our nation; pray He will show His mercy by saving unreached people.

## Daniel's Plea for God's Forgiveness and Favor

*"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. 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 9:18-19).*

Notice that Daniel is not making excuses for sin. He does not list the ways that he has been faithful to God. He clearly implores God for restoration based solely on God's mercy.

What does James 4:6 reveal about God's contrasting response to pride and humility?

According to 2 Chronicles 7:14, what action steps does God give to His people if they expect Him to respond to their prayers?

What does He promise will be His response to our obedience?

## God's Response to Daniel's Prayer

*"And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision" (Daniel 9:21-23).*

At what point in Daniel's pleading did God command Gabriel to go to him?

What was Gabriel sent to give him?

Daniel shows us that one righteous person can stand in the gap in prayer for a sinful nation. God hears that prayer and blesses His own for their good so that He receives the glory. Prayer is about the obedience of Christ's followers living out their faith and agreeing with God's promises for redemption, deliverance, salvation, and restoration—not only for themselves but for the whole world, all for God's glory and all for His sake.

According to James 5:16, what results from confessing our sins and praying for one another?

What is the effect of the prayer of a righteous man? Do you genuinely believe that your prayers are powerful and effective?

## It's Time to Pray!

Read Matthew 6:9-15. What is the focus in verses 9-10 of this prayer?

Note how Jesus' prayer and Daniel's prayer do not focus on personal comfort and protection from darkness. Their ultimate concern was to worship God and pray for God's kingdom to come and for God's will to be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

Yes, we should pray for "our daily bread," ask forgiveness, be led by God in righteousness, and be delivered from the evil one. But we must also remember to focus our prayer on God's purposes: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven."

To see revival in our hearts, homes, and churches so we can effectively reach the world for Christ, it must begin with believers humbling themselves before God—confessing, repenting, and interceding. When we do, He has promised to hear from Heaven and to heal our land for His glory.

As Christ-followers, we are called to be intercessors. We share the task and gift of interceding for God's people and His kingdom while working to spread the



gospel to all the nations of the world (Revelation 7:9).

### Shall we pray?

*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name.  
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:  
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.  
Amen.*

### Daniel Up! Eight tips for Developing a Consistent Prayer Life.

We don't get physically fit by occasionally eating a healthy meal or only exercising when we feel like it. It is the same way in our prayer life. As believers, our chief goal in life is to love God supremely and to serve His kingdom purpose to all nations until the ends of the earth are evangelized. So, we fight the good fight of faith; we run with endurance. When we do, we will reap a harvest, if we do not give up (Galatians 6:9).

1. Choose to pray.
2. Carve out a specific time and place to pray and read God's Word daily.
3. Consistently show up.

4. Contemplate God's goodness and greatness.
5. Confess your sins both personally and corporately.
6. Count your blessings.
7. Center your focus on Christ and His kingdom's purposes.
8. Cease not.

You can find a daily prayer guide to praying specifically for unreached people groups by downloading the Unreached of the Day app from Joshua Project (<https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday>).

“The world is deathly ill. It is dying. The Great Physician has already signed the death certificate. Yet, there is still a great work for Christians to do. They are to be streams of living water, channels of mercy to those who are still in the world. It is possible for them to do this because they are overcomers.”—Corrie Ten Boom

April talks about the importance of prayer in the life of a disciple of Jesus. Check out the discussion here: <https://youtu.be/YiP8ZFmCdq4>

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