

“A Pattern for Proper Praying” by Pastor Rand Lankheet.

Covenant Reformed Church of Toronto. Preached on May 15, 2011, for the first service.

Scripture reading: Daniel 9:1-23a; text vss. 4-19.

Before reading: The book of Daniel is about how God used the man Daniel, and his friends, in high places of government in a foreign land. Daniel was among the group of Jews taken by King Nebuchadnezzar, exiled to his capital city of Babylon.

Daniel gained the attention of the king by being able to interpret the king’s dreams.

He did that, of course, by God’s wisdom.

God also gave Daniel visions and dreams about the future,

not only about the future of Israel, but also about the future of various world empires.

And about the eventual coming of the Lord Jesus.

By the time of Daniel chapter 9, the empire of the Babylonians had fallen.

And the Medes and Persians were in power.

We’re focusing on the prayer of Daniel in chapter 9.

Daniel’s prayer can be an example, a pattern, for our praying. [Read...

Sermon Introduction:

Some of the children here have learned the acronym for longer, biblical praying:

4 elements in most prayers. A-C-T-S. “Acts”

A=refers to Adoration, praising God for who He is; C=Confession, confession our sins.

T=Thanksgiving, thanking God for what he gives us. S=Supplication. That is, making our requests, asking God for the things we and others need in our lives.

The prayer in Daniel 9 has a little bit of A=Adoration. But is it mostly C, confession.

There is not much T=Thanksgiving. Dan’s prayer ends with a little bit of S=Supplication.

So, we’re looking at 3 of the normally 4 main elements of prayer.

1. Well, let’s begin by noting **the “Adoration”** in Daniel’s prayer. Adoration, or praise.

In his prayer, Daniel is praising the Lord.

-Now, back in chapter 6, we read that Daniel was a man of prayer.

We’re told it was his custom to pray at least 3 times a day, in more formal, and extended prayer.

No doubt he prayed more than 3 times a day...but those were his special times for prayer.

Here in ch.9, Daniel is praying after he reads from the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah, the prophet.

We have Jeremiah’s book in our Bibles. Jeremiah also wrote the book of Lamentations.

Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet, or the prophet in great lament and mourning.

Jeremiah was mourning over the destruction of Jerusalem, the city of God.

He laments the great desolation that came upon the southern kingdom of Israel.

Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed. Thousands of leading Jews were exiled.

Daniel also learns from Jer. that the exile of the Jewish people would last for 70 years.

By this time, about 68 of those years have passed by, only 2 years are remaining.

Daniel understands that in the next couple of years God will be rescuing His people.

So, he prays. He prays hard. He prays deeply and sincerely, from his heart.

-As we've noted, Daniel mostly confesses his and the people's sins.

But look how he begins with some words of "Adoration." Look at vs. 4. Read vs. 4.

Here are at least, the seeds of praise and adoration...a starting point for praising the Lord.

That we, in prayer, would acknowledge who our God truly is, according to his Word.

Not only to acknowledge that...but then to praise and adore Him for who He is.

Vs. 4....the Lord, Adonai, is a "great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love."

-“Great.” The word in the original, as in English, means “great” in every way:

great in power, great in wisdom, great in reputation.

Great, like a great king. Great, like a mighty warrior. Great, like a wise scholar.

Universally-acknowledged as being great indeed. So is our God—so very, very great.

Using that exact same word, the Psalmist says: [Ps. 47]

“How awesome is the LORD, Yahweh, Most High, the **great King** over all the earth...God is the King of all the earth...God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne.”

And Psalm 48: “**Great is the LORD** [Yahweh], and most worthy of praise, in the city of our God...

Like your name, O God, your praise reaches to the ends of the earth.”

Our God is a great God, the most Powerful Force in all the universe.

And He is great in all his attributes, all his characteristics: great in His power, in wisdom,

in righteousness, in mercy, and great in his holiness. God is indeed very, very great.//

-And, says Daniel, vs. 4, the Lord is “awesome.”

Some teenagers will use that word, to express surprise or joy at some good news.

“It’s awesome,” they will say. But the word in the original is related to our word for “awe.”

In other words, Daniel knows that God is so great, great in so many ways. That Daniel is filled with “awe.” His mind and heart are flooded with wonder, and amazement, about the Lord.

Daniel starts his prayer, with Adoration. Praising God for his greatness.

Later, Daniel acknowledges other attributes of the Lord. For example, in vs. 9, he refers to the Lord's "mercy and forgiving."

In vs. 14, he mentions God's "righteousness." Praise God for his many attributes!

1.B. Appl: In your praying, or at least for most of it, don't start with yourself.

Don't start with your problems or difficulties or prayer requests. Start instead with God. How great He is, how powerful He is, how as a great King He rules over everything in this world.

And rules over everything in your life! That's important.

You see, we can view problems as controlling us...or confronting us. "What a big problem,"

we think. But we should look at it this way: We have a big God! A great, powerful God!

The Bible says that He controls everything, good and bad, that happens to us.

So when you start your prayer, praising God, acknowledging his greatness, then,

the problem is put in a different light. You start to think about your problem differently.

Not that the problem is so big.

But, your big, great, powerful God is putting that challenge into your life.

And now, you are calling on God to deal with what He has already given you.

And you ought to know that your God is bigger than any of your problems.

So, start your prayers with praise, extolling and exalting the Lord, and all his attributes.

And you can see those problems are things God is giving you. Why would He do that?

Well, maybe to test you. Maybe it is to rebuke or warn you about something in your life.

Maybe God is humbling you. Perhaps that challenge will cause you to be more prayerful.

God is so great. Not the problem. And God is always greater, bigger, than your problem.

-Start with adoration. Now, this prayer of Daniel only mentions some points of adoration.

But other prayers in the Bible, including many of the Psalms, are almost completely praise and adoration to God. Sometimes we should pray,

just spending time exalting and glorifying and praising the Lord. And nothing more.

2. A second element in this prayer. We've noted it's the large and overwhelming topic in

Daniel chapter 9. It's *confession of sin. Confession and repentance of sin.*

If you start with praising God, in your prayer...at some point, you will say

how holy and pure and righteous He is. But then, your mind will go to yourself.

In contrast to God's righteousness...you will see your own unrighteousness.

In contrast to God's holiness, you will see your own unholiness. And all your sin.

And that should bring you to confession of your sin.

That's what Daniel does. He's taking the role of a priest, in an informal sense.

He's speaking on behalf of the Israelite people.

Not only for the current generation, but also for previous generations. [Read vs. 7-11.

Remember, at this point, the Israelites are in exile, in Babylon, because of their sin against God.

Because they disobeyed the laws of God. So, God brought this punishment upon them.

The great and awesome God brought King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon against the Israelites,

taking them into exile. God was using the King to punish His people for their sin.

Daniel is completely honest: "The fault is ours, O Lord. The sin is ours. We sinned often.

We sinned deliberately. We sinned greatly. We have no excuse. [Read 11b-12.

-We today must pray that way. And it's good to move from praising the Lord, in prayer, for all his goodness and holiness.

And then to admit our own unrighteousness. Our own sin.

-Don't minimize that sin. Don't make excuses for it.

Yes, there were probably influences upon you to lead you to that temptation and sin.

But, despite those outside influences, you still did it. You sinned against God.

And what's even worse, as Christians, we sin even when we know better.

Even while we claim to be Christians, we still deliberately sin.

-Are you praying that way, making full and honest confession of your sin?

Parents, are you teaching your children, how to confess their sin, by confessing your sin?

Are you teaching them by your example?

And each Lord's Day, as we gather together in worship,

do we honestly acknowledge our sin before God?

Most people, even most Christians, do not truly make confession of sin in their prayers.

Or, they might tack it on at the very end of the prayer, like a "P.S." at the end of a letter:

"And-forgive-us-our-sin-for-Jesus-sake-Amen.

Be more honest before God. And humble yourself more and more before him, in your praying.

-And this is the good news, when we admit our sins, as Christians, humbling ourselves.

God promises to forgive our sin.

Not because we are deserving of that. But only because Jesus has died for your sin.

1 John 1 says, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

But if we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sin and cleans us from all [our] unrighteousness."

In James 4 we read: “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”

So, make sure, in your prayers, you are humbly making confession of your sin to God.//

3. Then a third element. As we’ve already noted, in Daniel’s prayer, this element is somewhat small. But in other biblical prayers, it’s a much larger element. Sometimes this element can become the majority of our prayer.

A=Adoration; C=Confession; T=Thanksgiving, in most prayers (not this one);

And then comes **S=Supplication**.

Daniel lifts up *his supplications, his prayer requests to the Lord*.

We’re told Daniel had read from the writings of Jeremiah. He understood

there were only a couple of years remaining in the Babylonian captivity of God’s people.

So he makes his request, to the Lord, to indeed deliver His people.

To return them back to their homeland. Back to Jerusalem, and the area of Judah.

[Read vs. 2-3.....“I pleaded with him [the Lord] in prayer *and petition*. **Petition**.

That’s another word for “supplication.” That is, making our requests to God in prayer.

-Now, we have to “read between the lines” a bit. The prayer request, the supplication, is somewhat hidden. But it is there, if you look carefully.

[Read vs. 15-17. Also, afterwards...[see vs. 20—“making my request.”

The Lord had brought Israel from out of Egypt about 1000 years earlier.

So now Daniel is asking that the Lord would bring his people out of Babylon, in the same way.

That the people would return to Jerusalem and Judah.

Vs. 18, second part: “We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, listen....O Lord, hear and act.”

3.B. As God’s people today, we lift up our requests, to God in prayer.

Notice, interestingly, Daniel is still not praying for himself, privately and individually.

He’s actually praying for the “Church” of that day, the covenant people of God.

So it should be in our prayers. Don’t first think of your personal needs, and bring them first.

Instead, first pray for all of God’s people. Pray for the Church universal.

Like what? What supplications, requests, can we make for Jesus’ Church today?

-For example, pray for His people today who are persecuted because of their faith.

Certain parts of China...recently again, pastors put in prison. Iraq, Christians leaving.

In lands with extreme Muslims, such as Pakistan, parts of Indonesia, other places.

-Pray for churches here in Canada. In so many places in our land, there is little preaching of Christ, and him crucified. Hardly anything is said about sin, and the need for Jesus, as our sacrifice for sin. We should pray for reformation in the churches of our land.

-Pray for this church, Jesus people gathered here.

Also that reformation and revival might be here, in our midst. +

-Likewise, we should pray collectively for Christians, and churches in poverty, around the world.

Jesus modeled this prayer request, in this way:

“Heavenly Father, give us this day our daily bread.” Notice? “Us.” Not merely daily bread for “me and mine.” Food for me and my immediate family. But food, material necessities, for Christian brothers and sisters, and others, around the world.

-One other prayer request. It’s implied at the start of Daniel’s prayer, in vs. 4.

Daniel speaks of the Lord, as “the great and awesome God, who keeps *his covenant of love* with all who love him and obey his commands....” Our God is a covenant God.

He keeps His loving covenant not only with parents. But also to the next generation, the children. To the little ones being raised in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

Jesus once referred to his blood, as “the blood of the covenant.”

Jesus blood, atoning for the sins, even of these little covenant children.

So we should also be making our requests, our supplications, for our little children.

That as they grow older, they will know Jesus...and the reality of His shed blood for them.

And that they will be responding in true faith, to God’s covenant of love with them.

So we pray. We pray with adoration, praising our God for who He is.

We pray, making confession, confessing our sin, humbling ourselves.

And we pray with supplications, making our requests to our God.

And to that, all God’s people said, AMEN.