

THE
DANIEL
PRAYER

PRAYER THAT MOVES HEAVEN
AND CHANGES NATIONS

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The Daniel Prayer

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Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, 3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

ISBN 978-0-26290-9

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Published in association with the literary agency of Alive Communications, Inc., 7680 Goddard Street, Suite 200, Colorado Springs, CO 80920. www.alivecommunications.com

Art direction: Name goes here

Interior design: Denise Froehlich

First printing March 2016 / Printed in the United States of America

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IT'S TIME TO PRAY THE DANIEL PRAYER

The air was electric.

People were shouting, crying, pleading with God. Some were standing with raised hands, others were on their knees, and still others were prostrate on the floor. My brother Franklin had just entered the auditorium, and I remember glimpsing his face at the doorway, his eyes wide as he mouthed, “What’s going on?”

We were in Suva, Fiji, where Samaritan’s Purse was hosting a conference for church workers. Six hundred people had come in from the dozens of surrounding islands to attend. I had just finished speaking on the prophet Samuel, presenting the tragic truth that while he was a judge, a prophet, and a kingmaker extraordinaire, Samuel was not a good father. His sons did not follow the Lord. My challenge to the mostly male audience was not to be so focused on ministry that they neglected their own wives and children.

When I issued the invitation to repent of their sin and to commit to training up their children in the Lord, almost the entire audience of pastors and church leaders surged forward. They began pouring out their hearts in an urgent, desperate, passionate pleading with God to forgive, to have mercy, to bless. They were not praying in other languages. I could understand what they were saying, but the atmosphere itself was thick with the presence of God.

I remember a woman seizing me by the arm and pulling me into her circle for prayer. *Pray?* I was totally intimidated to pray in such a group. For good reason. When I opened my mouth and tried, my voice sounded hollow. My prayer seemed wretchedly anemic in the midst of such fervent intensity.

I had never before heard prayer like I heard on that day in Suva, Fiji. Actually, rarely have I ever heard prayer like that anywhere, which has led me to wonder why our prayers often lack that kind of power, passion, and persuasion. What are we missing? *What was I missing?*

While there may be more than one answer to my question, could it be that one key ingredient that is missing is an all-out, no-holds-barred, go-for-broke, nothing-held-back, old-fashioned commitment to pray? The kind of commitment that's born out of desperation. Intense aspiration. Soulful longing. The kind of commitment athletes make to win the race or the game or the trophy or the medal. The kind of commitment that makes sacrifices, accepts responsibility, keeps obligations, and overcomes obstacles.

The kind of urgent plea we find in the Daniel Prayer.

This is not a casual, every-day, pray-as-you-feel-like-it, run-of-the-mill, garden-variety type of prayer. It is not even a flare sent up as a distress call for help. The Daniel Prayer is a commitment. A commitment that perseveres over any and every obstacle until Heaven is moved and nations are changed.

The original Daniel Prayer was a desperate plea uttered by one man, Daniel, on behalf of his nation—Judah—that had come under God's judgment. For an entire generation—for seventy years—his people were held in captivity by their enemy, the Babylonians, and separated from God's place of blessing.

The sad reality was that God had repeatedly forewarned the

nation that if there was no national repentance of sin, judgment would fall.

Daniel's people would have to have known that this was no idle warning. Because when the ten northern tribes of Israel had embraced idolatry, refusing to heed God's repeated warnings of judgment, God had sent in the Assyrians who destroyed the Northern Kingdom.¹ The Southern Kingdom of Judah, with the smaller tribe of Benjamin, was the remaining remnant of what had been the nation of Israel under King David and his successor-son, Solomon.

Now God was issuing those same warnings to Judah. He had sent messenger after messenger, including Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, who had each faithfully delivered the message with every conceivable emphasis and nuance. The messengers spoke clearly, powerfully, visually, audibly, emotionally, factually, accurately, and truthfully. The people were left with no excuse and no defense for not "getting it." But the nation of Judah refused to heed God's warnings, and so judgment fell.

Judgment came in the form of the Babylonians who were ruled by the ruthless emperor Nebuchadnezzar. They had previously conquered Assyria, then Egypt. Following their conquest of those two major world powers, they swept through Judah, leveled Jerusalem, looted the temple treasures, and forcibly took God's people to Babylon in a series of three deportations, effectively enslaving the entire population. In a relatively short period of time, Judah was erased from the national scene. She no longer existed as she had for over five hundred years. She was a people and a nation in exile.

Daniel was approximately fifteen years of age when he was captured by the Babylonians and deported eight hundred miles east of Jerusalem to serve as a slave in Nebuchadnezzar's court. His

situation seemed utterly hopeless and helpless. He had no human rights commission to appeal to, no friendly government to seek intervention from, no international criminal court to take up his case, no dream team of lawyers to represent him. He was abducted to serve an emperor who had absolute world power and was accountable to no one.

Yet through it all, Daniel glorified God by his character and his conduct. His service was so extraordinary that he rapidly rose up through the ranks to become a national leader as well as a counselor to kings. As young as he was, Daniel may not have known about the power of prayer from experience. But as his story unfolds, it's clear he knew something about the power of his God, although his knowledge may have been based not on his own experience, but on his nation's history. It didn't take long for Daniel, in the desperate situations he faced, to discover the power of God through prayer. Because God was all that Daniel had. Again and again he threw himself upon God with such complete faith and utter dependence that God came through for him. Powerfully. Personally. Dramatically. Repeatedly.

Daniel's meteoric rise to prominence remains even more remarkable because when he arrived in Babylon as a young teenager, he was subjected to its strange customs, unfamiliar language, elaborate dress, exotic foods, and pagan gods—a kind of cultural brainwashing. He was stripped of his identity and given a new name, Belteshazzar.² The purpose of the new name, which was a tribute to a Babylonian god, would have been to destroy Daniel's loyalty and allegiance to his own God. He was also cruelly stripped of his masculinity and forced to become a eunuch to make him more subservient to his new master.³ And he was commanded to honor false gods by eating food that had been first sacrificed to them.

The cumulative message was clear. Daniel was to serve the emperor with all his heart, mind, soul, body, and strength. He was to so immerse himself in Babylon that he would be severed from his past in order to embrace the present as the only reality. Everything was designed to force Daniel to conform to the Babylonian mold to serve at Nebuchadnezzar's pleasure.

*But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself . . .*⁴ And thus he began his remarkable career that spanned two world empires and the entire time of his nation's captivity. At great risk to himself, again and again, he maintained his undivided devotion to God. In turn, God gave him *knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.*⁵ He rose to be the equivalent of prime minister under four emperors: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus.

And yet Daniel never forgot the temple that had been the heart of Jerusalem and of the nation. Even at the end of his life, he remained mindful of the sacrifices that had been offered to God there as an act of obedient worship. He longed for Jerusalem every day of his life, evidenced by the fact that three times daily, when he prayed, he turned his face in the direction of his beloved city that once had been.

Again and again Daniel's life was threatened and seemed on the verge of annihilation. But each time, in response to Daniel's remarkable, steadfast faith, God demonstrated His supernatural power to honor the one who honored Him.⁶ He miraculously intervened to save Daniel from Nebuchadnezzar's fury, Belshazzar's folly, and Darius' fanaticism until He performed the greatest miracle of all in answer to Daniel's prayer. God moved Cyrus to issue the decree that after seventy years of captivity, every Jew living in Babylon could go home.

What kind of prayer was it that when offered by one person on behalf of a people who were under God's judgment, Heaven was moved and a nation was changed?⁷ What was the secret to the spiritual restoration, renewal, and revival of Judah? What can we learn today from Daniel's prayer that would move Heaven and change our beloved nation? Even after a full generation of apostasy and separation from national faith in the living God, is it possible that the prayer of one person could bring renewal, restoration, and revival to America?

That's what I want to find out.

I believe it's time to pray like Daniel.

Now.

Make no mistake: our nation—and our world-- are coming under the judgment of God. By the time this book is released, this reality may be even more apparent than it is now as I write. God uses dramatic world events to get people's attention. Revelation 6-19, and many other Scriptures⁸, reveal that such indicators will be intertwined with His judgment in the end. The signs are all around us.

When natural disasters—hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, avalanches, wildfires, floods, droughts, and tornadoes—repeatedly break records and claim lives . . .

When rumors of war encircle the globe daily because mercurial leaders break treaties and shatter alliances, bully other nations, and disregard sovereign borders . . .

When our culture obsesses about celebrities without moral scruples who blatantly sensationalize their sinful exploits . . .

When women and children are trafficked and degraded for billions of dollars in pornographic profit . . .

When work, sports, movies, video games, and tech toys consume our thoughts with no time left to focus on what matters most . . .

When political solutions repeatedly fail to remedy what must begin with wet eyes, broken hearts, and bended knees . . .

I realize we must be cautious when interpreting current events and natural disasters. The rain falls on the just and on the unjust. Bad things often happen to good people for no obvious reason we can discern. But God has not called me to speak tentatively or without a sound biblical basis for what I see happening around us today. There are three reasons I believe God's patience may be running out.

One: We have willingly, intentionally, deliberately taken the lives of almost 60 million children. Most of these abortions were not done for medical reasons, but for the convenience of the mother as a means of birth control.

Two: Our defiance of God's institution of marriage.

Three: Our abandonment of the nation of Israel.

I use "we" and "our" to refer to our nation in these three reasons for God's judgment. Certainly, these three national sins would bring God's judgment to any group of people practicing them. But it is especially concerning to see the United States of America, a nation founded on faith in God and dedicated to His glory by our first President and the Continental Congress, defy Him, seek to remove Him, and rebel against His ways.⁹

And there's only one solution.

When faced with God's righteous judgment, there is nothing . . . *nothing* . . . no politics or president, no government or agreement, no institution or organization, no media or ministry,

no economy or military, no alliance or treaty . . . *nothing* will turn our nation around except prayer.

Heartfelt, desperate prayer. Prayer where the pray-ers rend their hearts, return to the Cross, and repent of personal and national sin. Only prayer that moves Heaven can change a nation.

And that's the Daniel Prayer.



THE ORIGINAL DANIEL PRAYER

DANIEL 9:1–23

In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom—in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed:

“Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land.

Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame—the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. We and our kings, our princes and our ancestors are covered with shame, Lord, because we have sinned against you. The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled

against him; we have not obeyed the Lord our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you. You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing on us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem. Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come on us, yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. The Lord did not hesitate to bring the disaster on us, for the Lord our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him.

Now, Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day, we have sinned, we have done wrong. Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. Our sins and the iniquities of our ancestors have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us.

Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.”

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, a word went out, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed.”

**To learn more about *The Daniel Prayer*, visit:
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