

#When You Haven't Got a Prayer, Series  
Borrow a Prayer for a New Beginning  
Daniel 9:4-18 (The Message Bible)  
July 24, 2011

**Video "Some People Change"**

God has given us the freedom to choose, which means God makes us able to change. The music video we just watched, describes well how some people change even when their lives seem to be caught in the deepest and darkest of sin, miss-direction, whether it is about racism, addictions, or anything else. New beginnings are possible by the help of God. Today we look at the prayer of Daniel from the Old Testament. Daniel's prayer was for a new beginning. Maybe there is a new beginning you are seeking and borrowing a prayer from Daniel can help give your efforts the prayer focus it needs.

But before we even begin to pick up on various portions of Daniel's prayer, we need to have some background, some context about Daniel's life and the reason behind his prayer for a new beginning. Daniel prayed for he and his people because they were living in a foreign land. His nation of Israel had been defeated and especially the key leadership had been carried away into captivity. They were defeated because of their disobedience to God.

Today there may be some aspect of who you are or life circumstance and you are tired of being captive, cornered by the wrong attitude, behavior or relationships and you're seeking a fresh start a new beginning. There are principles in his prayer that can help us collectively as a church and as an individuals. And what I want us to keep in mind is that if you keep reading in this ninth chapter, when Daniel's prayer was finished, God sent a messenger to let Daniel know his prayer had been heard and gave a vision to Daniel about the future activity God was going to take.

Daniel wasn't given an immediate bail out; but he was given God's strength, presence, and hope to face the future. If you need a prayer to take some new step, seek some new chapter or beginning for your life; pay close attention to the content of Daniel's prayer.

### **Confession that is candid: vs.5-6**

Seeking God's help for a fresh start takes some confession to God that is candid. Confession is to dare to look at the worst of who we are or what we have done and share it with God. Confession is more than telling God the truth; it's telling ourselves the truth. Some once said, **Swallow your pride occasionally, it's non-fattening!** ~Author Unknown . Lets look as verses 5-6 that reveals how Daniel swallowed his pride and admitted the truth about the nature of their disobedience.

#### **Read 9:5-6**

- Daniel and his people had reaped the consequences of their unfaithfulness. He said they sinned in every way imaginable. So any wrong you have committed, you're not alone.
- He said they dodged and detoured God's truth.
- Daniel confessed they had turned a deaf ear to God. We're not the only ones who tune God out.

They had lost power, prestige and freedom. Daniel knew that if the life direction was going to be different than the past and become consistent with God's will: then he and his people had to come face to face with just why and how far they had strayed away from God. Keep in mind God answered Daniel's candid prayer.

To really appreciate Daniel's prayer, and especially a prayer that was answered so quickly by God, I began to think about something the prophet Isaiah said about the people of God. Isaiah was a prophet that lived long before Daniel. He warned the people long before Daniel that God was tired of his people just going through the motions of worship. God saw that the offering of sacrifices were given without real joy. People gathered without passion for God; just meeting because they were suppose to. They're lives

weren't being lived by godly principles. Isaiah told his people long before Daniel came on the scene that God was tired of religion. There was a difference between the way Daniel approached God and the people of Isaiah's day approached God. The people of Isaiah's day lacked that candidness. But God honored the candid prayer of Daniel. Daniel recognized there cannot be a new beginning if past sins were going to be repeated or made the new normal for living.

If you're looking for God's help to find a new beginning how clearly are you talking things over with God? How willing are you to swallow your pride? As we push forward as a church, how candid are we willingly to be to ask what holds us back and what must we do to become the church scripture teaches us to be? A new beginning requires a compelling confession about our ways that are inconsistent with God's truth and will. You may be praying and seeking God for some new beginning, so as you do be candid and clear with God about what needs to be different, what your truest hopes or anguish is really about.

### **Confession that is cathartic: vs.7-8**

Daniel's confession was cathartic, meaning it was deep within his soul, his heart. He felt the prayer as much as he spoke the prayer. We hear the depth of his confession in the words we find in verses 7-8. Read text.

Daniel used the words shame and guilt. He used the word shame twice. The significance of those words is that Daniel was emotionally feeling the impact of the rebellion.

Daniel wasn't just on a mind trip here. The insight about the wrong was hitting his heart and he felt it at a gut level.

New beginnings that are seeking God to move within us involve the head and emotions. If your attempts seem to stall out, perhaps your prayer and soul searching isn't going deep enough?

Do you feel the weight of your prayers?

Are we telling God what is going on from our hearts not just the facts?

**Illustration:** Sometimes in our attempt at seeking God's help through prayer we try and toss God the right words but the real stuff of remorse for sin and passion to pursue God is lacking, it's just not there. God knows it; but we're clueless or avoiding.

I was leaving the YMCA one day this week and on my way out I stopped to talk with one of the staff, a guy name Simon. Simon sometimes brings his little girl with him and I would guess she is about 4-5 years old. As I stood there I noticed she had an open pack of the round peanut butter crackers placed on a small stand next to her chair where she was sitting. Simon reach over to the pack, picked up a cracker, took a bite and then frowned. I said what's the matter is the cracker stale? He said no, my daughter likes to lick the peanut butter off the crackers and then puts the crackers back for me to eat.

She doesn't know any better yet. She doesn't mean any disrespect toward her father. But she is not sharing the good stuff with her dad, all he's getting are the soggy crackers.

Spiritually speaking, if our prayers to God are not candid and from our hearts, then we're not sharing the real stuff with God that we need to in order to find God's help.

### **Confession that honors God: vs.18**

I love one of the final things Daniel stated in his prayer. In verse 18 he said, **“So listen God, to this determined prayer of your servant. Have mercy on your ruined Sanctuary. Act out of who you are, not out of what we are.”** The New Revised Standard Bible states, **“We do not present our supplication**

**before you on the ground of our righteousness, but the ground of your great mercies.”** Daniel sees the reality of life in its truest form because Daniel was coming to terms with a truth we don't always want to face. The greatest words of honor to God are, Lord you don't owe us any thing. No matter what we are praying for God doesn't owe us. That truth and reality is what makes the grace of God we are always talking about - grace. Grace or the gift of God is not just that God loves in spite of our sin, grace is God doesn't owe us anything. God doesn't owe us health, abundance, prosperity, protection nothing. He owes us absolutely nothing. He could turn out the lights on the entire universe and call it a day and he would still be God.

So for Daniel to ask in such away he gives God the greatest honor. He is not praying just because he is suppose to. He is not using the foxhole prayer of desperation bargaining with God.

He is trusting in the goodness that God's power still stands behind his people even though in the past and in spite of many warnings, they brushed God aside.

I see this truth in a commercial that ran during this past year's Super Bowl. If you watched it. take and look and see if your remember this ad.

Candid confession to God is to acknowledge how we have overestimated our power like the little boy. He was running around the house attempting to exercise control he just doesn't have and we do the same over people and situations. When his dad comes home and offers a hug, and the brushes his dad off. We all have our moments when we brush God aside. Too busy to worship, to pray, to learn his word, but we'll elevate other natters to greater importance.

I love the end of the commercial where the father stands in the

kitchen and starts the car. Daniel's prayer in verse 18 was asking God to stand behind his people once again and empower them with help and hope.

Maybe the one thing you need to borrow from Daniel's prayer for a while is to acknowledge to God, he/she doesn't owe you anything. When we pray that humbly, knowing God owes us nothing but we trust him, we are more likely to see the answers God is giving instead of what we want. We are more likely to accept the sacrifices we have to make. We are more in tuned with God who is eternal than the temporary pleasures and accomplishments of this life. Then especially the disappointments of this life cannot defeat us.