

And I Prayed to the Lord My God  
By Trey Sullins

Prayer is a powerful thing. All throughout the Bible there are many examples of those who have prayed to God for different reasons. In many of these instances we see just how powerful something so seemingly simple is. One such instance is in Daniel 9:1-16. The time of this passage is well after the destruction of Northern Israel and Southern Judah. The Judean's were captive in a faraway nation, but with one humble prayer from Daniel the ancient promised return was set in motion.

Daniel humbled himself before God in verse 3. Before this moment Daniel had realized that God promised that after seventy years, he would return them to the land of Jerusalem. Verse 3 was Daniel's immediate response. Rather than complaining that God had not done anything yet, Daniel only set himself to humble prayer and supplication. The Bible says that he did this with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. The act of putting on sackcloth and ashes was a common sign of lowness and a recognition of who Daniel was in the sight of the almighty God. This same type of humility is what we need to have as Christians. Numerous times the Bible references the idea similar to that found in James 4:6: "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble." The wording is very clear that those who, like Daniel, put themselves low before God will be lifted in the end. Another idea presented over in Romans 12:16 is that we should try our best to associate with those who are humble too. These types of people would influence us for the better.

Daniel confessed sins before God in verse 5. Daniel understood that the very reason they were in a foreign land was due to the sins of his people. Many times, throughout their history they forgot about their God and relied more on their wealth and physical power as a nation (Hosea 4:6-7). The Israelites had turned to just about everything other than God by the time the destruction of Judea had come (Jeremiah 2:5-6). Because of this, Daniel prayed, "we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments." It is important to remember also that Daniel was bearing the burden of sins that previous generations of Israel had committed. Yet just the same he accepts the guilt of these things and asks God for forgiveness. This example is especially powerful when you consider that we often have troubles accepting the smallest of guilt for our own sins. The New Testament makes it plain that we should always be confessing of our sins and working to make them right (1 John 1:9).

Daniel begs for mercy from God. Because Daniel recognized that their current state was their punishment, he begged that God would bring it to an end as promised (Daniel 9:13). He asks that God would turn away His anger: "O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins" (Daniel 9:16). He also asks God to hear him, forgive them, and not to delay in all these things. One important line is in verse 18, "we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies." Daniel was humble enough to recognize that they did not deserve anything other than punishment but made these requests because of the great mercy of God. Such an attitude is exactly how we need to be as well. Like old Israel, we have been shown great mercy from God. Ephesians 2:4-5 points out that God's mercy and love caused Him to make us alive again even though we were dead in sins. His mercy is not

limited to only the first forgiveness, but we can be continually forgiven as we repent of our sins. Truly, our God is good and “His mercy endures forever” (Psalm 136:1). However, it is on us to recognize His mercy, be grateful for it, and ask for it from God.

The end result of this humble prayer was that before Daniel was even finished God gave him an answer. Sometimes in our world of instant information and quest to understand everything around us, we forget just how important prayer is. Many will mock those who pray and claim it as useless. History proves these people wrong as God hears the prayers of the righteous (Proverbs 15:29). Certainly, prayer is powerful.