



**Conversation with God – Part 5**  
**Daniel 9:23**  
**GCSP – 01/03/2009**

It's a New Year. Many people make New Year's resolutions at the start of each year. I don't know what you think of this practice but I guess you could say I have mixed feelings.

On the negative side I am slightly concerned about making a commitment I won't keep. Scripture is clear that we are to follow through with the commitments we make, and sometimes our resolutions can require more effort than we are willing to put forth. Having a high and worthy goal is one thing, making a resolution or a commitment is another.

On the positive side of making New Year's resolutions, it is a good practice to take stock of your life to find where improvement and change is needed. This can obviously be done at any time of the year but the start of a New Year seems to help most people focus on these needed changes.

So the bottom line for me is to set challenging and worthy goals but be careful as to what you commit to do; realizing that commitments are to be kept and extra effort will be required on your part. You can't make a commitment and then go about your life as usual.

Before New Year's resolutions were the thing to do, a young man by the name of Jonathan Edwards made 70 resolutions for his life between the ages of 19-20. Allow me to read a few of them to you.

*#5 – Resolved, never to lose one moment of time; but improve it the most profitable way I possibly can.*

*#6 – Resolved, to live with all my might, while I do live.*

*#14 – Resolved, never to do anything out of revenge.*

*#17 – Resolved, that I will live so, as I shall wish I had done when I come to die.*

*#28 – Resolved, to study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly, and frequently, as that I may find, and plainly perceive myself to grow in the knowledge of the same.*

*#29 – Resolved, never to count that a prayer, nor to let pass as a prayer, nor that as a petition of a prayer which is so made, that I cannot hope that God will answer it; nor that as a confession, which I cannot hope God will accept.*

(I love how Edwards shows his humanness in this next one)

*#36 – Resolved, never to speak evil of any, except I have some particular good call for it.*

*#56 – Resolved, never to give over, nor in the least to slacken, my fight with corruptions (sins), however unsuccessful I may be.*

By most accounts of his life, Jonathan Edwards lived closely by these resolutions he made as a young man.

I truly believe it is going to be an exciting and tremendous year at Grace Church; and not just because it appears we will have a new church building by the end of the summer or fall. I believe God is on the verge of doing a mighty work in our midst, as we continue to grow spiritually and prepare our hearts for His service.

I believe God has taught us and continues to teach us about worship and fasting and now prayer, so that we will be a people who are truly seeking His face, and His manifest and active presence in our lives. I believe God has prepared us to have close, intimate, and dynamic fellowship with Him. I believe doors for unimagined ministry are about to be burst open wide for us to walk into. I believe the blessings of God are soon to be poured out on us in unprecedented manner. And I believe it is all coming soon.

Because of all of this and more, I believe it would be worthy of your consideration to resolve to make this a year in which your personal and intimate relationship with the Lord grows more than ever before through worship, fasting, the study of His Word and prayer.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the prophecy of **Daniel**. I am going to read a lengthy section of this chapter but we will primarily focus on just one verse.

### **Daniel 9:1-23**

Let's pray.

There is no need, no trial, no distress, no dilemma, no circumstance or situation that pounces on our lives in which prayer will not be a very present help. Daniel just read in God's Word that his captivity in Babylon is almost over. He has also been given a vision from the Lord concerning the future and the end times. Yet Daniel is not content with this knowledge so he goes to the Lord in prayer.

Let me ask you a question: Who is it best to go to when you do not understand something that is written down? Is it better to go to some so-called expert or is it better to go to the author?

As most of you know, God has called me to a ministry of writing along with the ministry of being the pastor of Grace Church. I am not as skilled a writer as I would like to be and thus sometimes my writing is misunderstood. If you read something I write but are a little confused as to what I meant, will you get clarification by asking Clay or John or Chuck or Dick or my wife what I meant, or will you be more likely to get that clarification by coming directly to me?

I am not telling you that you should ignore commentaries and reference materials, I have bookcases full of them, but I am saying that we should first go to the Author for

any clarification. I love the writings of many godly men and women, who have expounded the Scriptures through the years, and their writings have been instrumental in my biblical and spiritual education, but if I rely only on them for my understanding of Scripture I would be a fool. My understanding of the Bible would be severely limited if all my knowledge came from people who didn't write the Book.

This is how Daniel viewed things even though he was one of the instruments God was using to write the Book. Daniel desired more understanding so he devoted himself to prayer as opposed to trying to figure things out on his own.

Martin Luther has said some of his best understanding of Holy Scripture came not from meditation but from prayer.

Charles Spurgeon said, *"When the hammers of learning and exegesis have failed to break open a flinty text, oftentimes prayer has done it, and nuggets of gold have been found concealed therein."*

To every student of God's Word, let me say, with all of your commentaries and all of your word studies and all of your digging into Scripture and all of your research and all the footnotes in your Bible, be sure you mingle it generously with prayer. To have prayed well is to have studied well.

The main point I want us to now get to is that Daniel's prayer was answered immediately. **"At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed" (v. 23a).**

Immediate answers are not always the norm when we pray but we must understand that the lack of an immediate answer does not mean there was a lack of hearing on God's part. Unanswered prayer does not mean it was an unheard prayer. We should never consider God slow or slack by measuring His doings by our standards. God's timing will always be better than ours.

But in this case with Daniel, the answer was immediate.

In **Isaiah 65:24**, God says, **"It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear."** Our heart's desires should be that at the beginning of our prayers we would have an answer from the throne of grace. Our earnest longings should be to be like Daniel and be **highly esteemed** when our prayers begin to leave our lips, so that at the beginning of our supplications the command would be issued.

What caused God to answer Daniel's prayer so quickly? There are several probable reasons found in this passage, outside of the fact that God is God and He can choose to do whatever He wants.

**Verse 3** gives us the first probable reason – **"So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes."** The condition of Daniel's heart was ready for an immediate answer.

### Daniel Was Determined to Obtain the Blessings He Was Seeking

We know Daniel's heart was ready because he was determined to obtain the blessing that he was seeking. The New King James Version translates the opening of **verse 3** this way: "**Then I set my face toward the Lord God.**" I believe that translation adds more emphasis than "**I gave my attention to the Lord God.**" Both are accurate but setting your face toward the Lord God has a resolve and a focus implied in it. The warriors who win in this world are the ones who resolve to conquer or die; the half-hearted or double-minded man gets nowhere in this life. If a thing is worth doing it is worth doing well, and if it is not worth doing thoroughly then a wise person will let it alone.

This is especially true in our spiritual lives. Wonders are not done for God and for the truth of God's Word by sleeping men and women. Souls are not introduced to Jesus Christ and saved by those who hardly know or care whether they are saved themselves. False teaching is not refuted by those who take not the time to know the truth.

During the Reformation there were many men who had more biblical knowledge and more understanding than Martin Luther did, but no one had the resolve and the passion and the fire in his belly like Luther. If a man or woman would do anything for God he or she must set their faces and the whole resolve of their beings and will to serve their God. We must resolve to set our faces before the throne of grace until we leave with blessings we desire.

Never will a man or a woman be unsuccessful in prayer if they have set their faces to win the promised mercy. If you are seeking what you ought to be seeking, and if you are seeking it by faith through Christ, the only qualification for success is to set your face toward the attaining of it.

And herein lies an important application for Grace Church. If we would set our faces toward the Lord God in the unity of the Holy Spirit for any worthy spiritual goal, it is ours. If even a dozen of us would set our faces toward the Lord God in seeking revival in South Park and beyond, we would have it. If only a half-dozen were unwavering and undeterred no matter how many difficulties come our way; if nothing could turn us back from setting our faces on the Lord God, as sure as God is God we would have our answer. If it came down to but two or three who are in agreement as to touching one thing for the kingdom, we would have it. And quite honestly if two cannot be found but one faithful saint is left, provided that one saint had the resolve and passion and heart of Daniel, he or she would prevail as Daniel did.

I pray that this kind of resolve and passion and desire would burn intensely within you. I pray that the Holy Spirit would light that fire, so that you would not be satisfied until your largest and most impossible prayers are answered. This was the case with Daniel and it can also be the case with you.

### Daniel Felt Deeply for the Misery of His People

We know that the condition of Daniel's heart was ready because he was determined to obtain the blessing he was seeking, and we also know this because Daniel felt deeply the misery of his people.

**v. 5 – “We have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances.”**

**v. 6 – “Moreover we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name...”**

**v. 8 – “Open shame belongs to us, O Lord...because we have sinned against You.”**

**v. 9 – “...we have rebelled against Him.”**

**v. 10 – “Nor have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God.”**

**v. 11 – “Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice.”**

**v. 12 – “...for under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what was done to Jerusalem.”**

If revival is something we truly desire then there will be a sorrow deep within us for the plight of those who do not know Jesus Christ. Our hearts will ache for those who are swiftly running to the gates of hell. You can't pray as you should for revival if you care not for the soul of the person you meet in the grocery store or pass by on the street. That would be a half-hearted and unsuccessful prayer for revival.

If we truly desire revival we had better be about the business of reminding ourselves of the fate that awaits all those who reject Christ. We had better get the stench of eternal flames in our nostrils. We need to re-read the verses that speak of the horrors of hell and the agony of eternal punishment. We must understand the reality of **Hebrews 10:27** which speaks of, **“a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.”** We must understand that our God is a **“consuming fire”** to those who reject His Word.

If we could hear the screaming and the cries of those in hell right now, if we could feel the intensity of their pain, and if we could smell the rotteness of that horrible place created for Satan and his demons, then we would know the intensity and passion we are to have in setting our faces toward the Lord God for the purpose of revival and the salvation of the lost.

Daniel felt the misery of his people and was thus able to properly set his face toward the Lord God on their behalf.

#### Daniel Felt Deeply His Own Sinfulness

Not only was Daniel determined to obtain the blessing he was seeking, and not only did Daniel feel deeply the misery of his people, he also understood his own sinfulness.

In all of the verse we read in making the last point, I trust you noticed that Daniel did not say they sinned, and they disobeyed; instead he always said we. Daniel acknowledges sins of commission, sins of omission, sins of disobedience, and sins of not

listening to God's servants. He lays his heart bare before the Lord and places himself right alongside the vilest offenders in Israel.

Let us go before our God with confession and repentance. We all have sins that need confession. I have sins you may not be aware of but they are there. You have sins others may not be aware of but they are there. We all need to join Daniel in repentance and we all need to join the Psalmist who says, "**Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts**" (**Psalm 139:23** – KJV).

Are you conscious of your own personal iniquity toward the Lord your God? Then don't let this evening end without a full confession before Him. If we have been proud, if there has been any bickering, if there are any ill feelings toward another in this church, if, if, if, don't let this evening end without such evil being purged. Most of our sin is undetected by all but God. Oh, I pray for great searching of the heart tonight!

Beloved, it is possible to spoil our prayers and stop the hand of God's blessing on your life and on this church unless every evil thing is put away. We must purge out the old leaven of sin and replace it with the new leaven of holiness. Idols of the heart must be torn down. The false gods of materialism and worldliness must be abolished and destroyed.

Let us confess our sinfulness, our coldness, our wanderings of the heart, so that we will be prepared and ready for a visit from God. When we empty our vessels God will come and fill them. When our hearts are thirsty for only the things of the Lord, the fountains of heaven will gush forth.

Hang onto whatever urgings the Holy Spirit may have placed in your heart right now because we still have a few more things to learn from Daniel.

#### Daniel Had a Clear Conviction of God's Power to Help His People

If we were left only with the conviction of our sinfulness and the hopeless state of the condition of our hearts, we would be ruined. But we have an everlasting hope. We have a God who is so powerful that He can forgive any sin. We have a God who is so merciful that all iniquity and transgressions against Him can be fixed. We have a God who is so patient and long-suffering that our delay in confession and repentance can be overlooked.

**v. 15 – "And now, O Lord our God, who have brought Your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and have made a name for Yourself, as it is this day – we have sinned, we have been wicked."**

Daniel is saying, "Lord, You did it before and You can do it again! You can glorify Your name anew by once again delivering Your people!"

You and I can draw comfort in knowing that our God is not only able but willing to deliver you from your sin anew. We worship a God who loves His chosen ones with an everlasting love. We worship a God who parted the Red Sea to allow His righteous ones to walk through on dry ground and then He swallowed up the evil ones as He released the fury of that Red Sea. This same God invites you to walk through on the dry ground

of His righteousness and allow your sins to be swallowed up by the Red Sea of Christ's atoning blood. We don't deserve it but this everlasting love is ours. We too can enter the Promised Land of His blessing if we will forsake the sinfulness of our past.

Daniel Had an Undying Earnestness in His Requests

**v. 19** – **"O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay!"** What passion Daniel had. When was the last time you prayed like that? When was the last time you prayed fervently? The Bible says, **"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"** (**James 5:16** – KJV). We must get rid of the icicles that hang on our lips. We must ask the Lord to thaw out the recesses of our souls and make our hearts hot like the furnace that was heated seven times hotter.

Those who are neither hot nor cold will be spit out of the Lord's mouth, and beloved I am afraid the condition of the church today is definitely lukewarm. We dare not expect the favor of the Lord if we are content with being lukewarm. I stand here and ask you not to pray if you are content with the condition of your spiritual life.

Beloved we must earnestly desire to have the same flame of holiness that the Apostles experienced in the early days of the church in the Book of Acts. We must genuinely seek a godly zeal, an earnest passionate desire, and a unyielding devotion to be about the Master's business so that Christ Himself would look upon us with great joy and satisfaction!

If that is the desire of your heart or even if you want that to be the desire of your heart but you admit you aren't there yet, please stand with me with heads bowed and eyes closed.

Let's pray.