

Daniel 9:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.

Analysis

Daniel's prayer approaches its climax: "O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies." The parallel imperatives—"incline...hear...open...behold"—urgently petition divine attention. The phrase "our desolations" references Jerusalem's ruins, appealing to God's compassion for His people's suffering.

The crucial phrase—"the city which is called by thy name"—grounds the petition in God's own glory. Jerusalem bore God's name; its desolation reflected on His reputation among nations (cf. Ezekiel 36:20-23). Daniel appeals not primarily to Israel's suffering but to God's honor—He must act to vindicate His name. This demonstrates proper prayer priority: God's glory above personal comfort. Christ taught this pattern: "Hallowed be thy name...thy kingdom come" precedes "give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:9-11).

The final disclaimer—"we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies"—explicitly renounces works-righteousness. Daniel, though personally righteous (Ezekiel 14:14), doesn't appeal to merit but to divine mercy alone. This models Reformed soteriology: salvation by grace through faith, not works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Christ's righteousness, not our own, provides access to God's throne (Hebrews 10:19-22).

Historical Context

Jerusalem's destruction (586 BC) and temple's burning devastated Israel physically and spiritually. The city "called by God's name" lay in ruins, seeming to contradict divine promises. Daniel prayed around 538 BC as the seventy years neared completion, seeking restoration based on God's mercy and name, not Israel's merit. Cyrus's decree allowing return (Ezra 1:1-4) answered this prayer.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does appealing to God's glory and name rather than personal merit model proper prayer priorities?
2. What does renouncing dependence on "our righteousnesses" teach about the sole ground for approaching God in prayer?
3. How does this prayer pattern point to Christ's righteousness as our only access to God's throne?

Interlinear Text

וּרְאֵה	עֵינֶי יְיָ	פָּקַח חַה	וּשְׁמַע	אָזְנוֹךָ	אֱלֹהֵי יוֹ	הִטָּה
and behold	thine eyes	open	and hear	thine ear	O my God	incline
H7200	H5869	H6491	H8085	H241	H430	H5186
כִּי יוֹ	עַל יְהִי	שְׁמֶךָ	נִקְרָא	אֲשֶׁר	וְהָעִיר	שְׁמֹמֶת יִנּוֹ
H3588	H5921	by thy name	which is called	H834	and the city	our desolations
		H8034	H7121		H5892	H8074
מִפִּיל יָם	אֲנִי חִנּוֹ	צְדִיקוֹתֶי יִנּוֹ	עַל לֹא			
for we do not present	H587	thee for our righteousnesses	H3808			
H5307		H6666				
הַרְבֵּימָּה	בְּחֶמֶךָ יְיָ	עַל כִּי	לִפְנֵי יְיָ	תַּחֲנוּנֵי יִנּוֹ		
but for thy great	mercies	H5921	H3588	our supplications		
H7227	H7356			H8469		
				H6440		

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 37:17 (References God): Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God.

Jeremiah 36:7 (Parallel theme): It may be they will present their supplication before the LORD, and will return every one from his evil way: for great is the anger and the fury that the LORD hath pronounced against this people.

Jeremiah 25:29 (Parallel theme): For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of hosts.

2 Kings 19:16 (References God): LORD, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, LORD, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God.

Jeremiah 15:16 (References God): Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

Jeremiah 14:7 (Parallel theme): O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee.

Ezekiel 36:32 (References God): Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org