

Intercessory Prayer for Revival of the Holy Spirit's Power in the Church **An Essay on the Less Known Condition of Receiving the Latter Rain¹**

“Then will the Lord be jealous for His land; and pity His people.” Joel 2:18

Intercessory prayer deserves more intelligent attention from Bible students than it receives. Satan has introduced, through the door of our ignorance on this point, an error that threatens to corrode our love for the brethren. The result has been decades wandering in the wilderness of this earth. We may have grown accustomed to living here.

If we are not praying intelligently, our spirit may be speaking a prayer we would not dare utter.

“Would God we had died in this wilderness!” Numbers 14:2.

This prayer, following the pessimism of the ten spies, finds a terrible and exact answer later in the chapter. “Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward², which have murmured against me.” Numbers 14:29.

The power of the Numbers 14:2 prayer for self-destruction is excelled by the power, in the same chapter, of Moses' prayer of intercession. In this essay we will note the relation of intercessory prayer to the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Then we will turn our attention to the elements of certain prayers that have special end-time significance.

In Joel 2 the early and the latter rain are promised on certain conditions. The first of these is implicit; the second explicit. Joel 2:12-17 contains a call to heart-searching prayer and fasting such as was required of Israel on the Day of Atonement.

The first condition in this passage is the congregational experience of repentance. “Rend your hearts and not your garments.” “Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.” “Turn to the Lord your God, for He is gracious.”

That this passage was written for Seventh-day Adventist may be deduced simply.

1. It is apocalyptic. See Joel 2:30-31.
2. It is written as an antitype of the Day of Atonement. Joel 2:12-14.
3. It includes a reference to intercession that fulfills the types of Numbers 11, 14, 16, and 20.
4. It includes references to the spiritual gifts of the Early and Latter Rain such as would mark the beginning and end of the gospel dispensation. They are mentioned together, an event that would not happen until the final harvest. Joel 2:23, 28, 29.

The First Condition

The Judgment-hour language denotes a mandate. Those that would not participate in the Day of Atonement would be ‘cut off’ from the congregation. This is the implicit condition. We must be earnestly, agonizingly, searching our heart. A spate of publications in the last twenty-five years have tended to oppose this message.

¹ This is a companion study to two articles by the same author titled “Laodicea” and “Intercession and Separation.” These essays are dependant on each other and are best read together. They may be found at www.canvassing.org/docs

² The specified age, twenty years old and upward, was no arbitrary pronouncement. The army had been numbered in Numbers 1:3, 18-45 on the basis of age. Those over 20 were counted as able to go to war and were held individually responsible to speak courageously and act faithfully. When Israel rebelled in Numbers 14 those that were accountable, by their position in the ranks of the army, were set aside for the self-wished judgment of a wilderness death.

Authors have testified how they suffered an insupportable burden of senseless guilt and self-condemnation fueled by fears that they would be unready for Christ's coming. This burden they shed as they discovered the "light" of the "gospel" of "grace." Now they call men everywhere to join them in the liberty of the sons of God.

But such say more than they know. They virtually attack the agonizing soul-searching required by those living in the judgment hour. Their own poorly-understood positions that frightened them in their youth caused them to run. But they ran the wrong way. God's calls to "weeping" and "mourning" are not calls to abject fear. They are calls to intelligent cooperation with the work of the Spirit.

Many progressed in a similar vein—building their eschatology by modifying it to fit with their soteriology. In other words, their ideas of how a man is saved were made the standard for evaluating their ideas on God's plan for his last-day church. The weakness with a structure so built is that the frame is only part Inspiration. It is fastened together with a great deal of self. If they err in any particular in their ideas regarding salvation, that error is magnified greatly in the building of their own end-time scenario.

A wiser course would have been to build a solid framework on the pillars of the sanctuary and judgment-hour message. God's revelations to the Advent body in regard to Daniel and Revelation are full of correctives for our mistaken ideas regarding salvation.³

And Joel 2 is one of those. It combines what many minds would separate: A whole-hearted dependence on God's graciousness and anguished soul-searching.

“Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.” Joel 2:12-13.

The Second Condition

The prophet Joel follows his call to national revival with a particular call to the “priests, the ministers of the Lord.” Joel 2:17. They are asked to weep, but not here for their own sins. They are burdened for the judgments that await their fellows and they pray “spare thy people, oh God!” They are that class that is sealed in Ezekiel 9, “sighing and crying” for the abominations of Jerusalem.

Their responsibility to intercede is the explicit condition. In the third section of this essay we will study how they are to pray to God for Israel. But here we observe what will come on the heal of their heart cries of prayer.

“Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people. Yea, the LORD will answer . . . Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.” Joel 2:17-19, 23.⁴

When the two conditions, soul-searching and intercessory prayer, have been met the Lord will respond with the outpouring of the Latter Rain. The rain hinges on intercessory prayer by those who understand the issues. They are the teachers, the priest, the ministers of the Lord, the Levites, in this final crisis.

³ The author has written several articles on these topics. See www.canvassing.org/docs

⁴ The intervening verses of promise, from the latter half of 19 to verse 22, are most interesting. But they are not within the scope of this essay. Hints to those who would understand them: The “harvest is the end of the world.” See Revelation 14. The Northern Army figures largely into Daniel 11:40-Daniel 12:1.

Intercession – A Bible Science

Moses' prayer in Numbers 14 spared the Israelite camp from imminent destruction. The Bible is clear that God's threat to "smite them with the pestilence and disinherit them" (Numbers 14:11) was no idle exaggeration.

"Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them." Psalms 106:23.

It was the prayer of Moses, the words chosen and the spirit that prompted them, that averted God's wrath.

"And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word:" Numbers 14:21

The recorded elements of Moses' prayer will form the backbone of this portion of the essay. Moses urged God to forgive the people and presented compelling reasons for this request. The entire prayer, as recorded in Numbers 14, is given below.

"And Moses said unto the LORD, 'Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou LORD art among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.'" Numbers 14:12-20.

Analytically, the prayer can be divided into four arguments. The first receives the greatest attention:

1. God, forgive because of your own reputation
2. God, forgive because of your promises, your Word
3. God, forgive because of your character, because of Who you are
4. God, forgive because you have done so in the past

Conspicuously missing are pseudo arguments such as the following: God, forgive because the people have been really trying. God, forgive because they have basically good hearts. God, forgive them because they are working for you. God, forgive them because what they did wasn't really too very terrible.

Such arguments virtually say that there isn't much to forgive. They belittle the significance of deviations from God's law.

But Moses' arguments simply ignore the quality of the people's behavior. They urge, instead, God's interests. God's truth is at stake. The searching persons will conclude that truth is a lie if those that profess to believe it come to nothing or suffer notable judgments. Such destructive judgments would seem to undo the impact of God's past miracles. So Moses mentions that God brought these very people up from Egypt.

Moses mentions that the people outside the camp are not wholly ignorant of the great things God has done for his people. In our time they have heard of the amazing messages regarding health and education that have been given to the Adventists. They know something of their moral courage and ethical purity. They know this even if it is not generally true because God has worked to increase the publicity of the few Daniel's and Joseph's and to leave in obscurity many less virtuous characters.

The second argument draws on the creative power of the Word. When God described His own character it was in terms of a promise to forgive. Moses did not miss this lesson and recalled it here when it could make a difference for his flock.

The same statement that God made about himself (found in Exodus 34:6-7) became the basis for the third argument as well. Why should God forgive His people? Because He wants to. It is His nature, the thing He longs to do. We will examine some evidence in favor of this after looking at the fourth argument.

God longs for us to urge past blessings as a reason why He should bless in the present. This type of argument gives evidence that we are mindful of and thankful for past blessings. It acknowledges that God's mercies are always fresh and never changing.

God Wants to Forgive

We can not suppose that our intercessory prayer changes God's mind and prompts Him to do something against His own better judgment. The Bible presents two stories that prove that God wants to forgive and prompts us to pray so that He may suppress the execution of justice. Consider the case of the ten tribes that had, prior to the time of Ezekiel, fallen into sad apostasy.

“Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain. And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken. The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully.” Ezekiel 22:27-29.

We might guess, after reading such a description, that the tribes were ripe for judgments from heaven. In this we would not be mistaken. But what was God looking for among the tribes?

“And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD.” Ezekiel 22:30-31.

Have you ever wondered where the ten tribes went? Why we can't find them today? The answer is disturbing. God was not able to find a Moses to pray, to “stand in the gap” mediating “for the land.” “Therefore” He “consumed them.”

God's search for an intercessor was more successful in the book of Job. After the three friends of the suffering saint had misrepresented God's justice and dared to speak for God without His authorization, they were accosted by the Lord.

“The LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, ‘My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job.’” Job 42:7-8.

That God did not wish to “deal with” the three is clear enough by the instructions He gave them to avert the judgment. God had found an intercessor and directed the friends to go to him and request prayer.

The story raises some interesting questions, not all of which are clearly answered in the passage. Why did God need Job's prayer? Why couldn't the three friends pray for each other and leave Job out of the picture?

We do not need to answer those questions, however, to note two obvious facts. First, God did need Job's intercession. Second, the three friends were not qualified to pray themselves out of the judgments their course of action had brought on them.

Stated in practical terms, the erring church needs the intercessory prayer of its faithful men, even of those it has oppressed by its false accusations. The latter class ought to recognize that Job is a type of the faithful in the last generation.

And just as the last generation's intercessory prayers precede the promised blessing of the Latter Rain, Job's intercessory prayers were the prelude to quite a change in his personal blessings of life.

“So Eliphaz ... and Bildad ... and Zophar ... went, and did according as the LORD commanded them: the LORD also accepted Job. And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.” Job 42:9-10.

God's Last Search for an Intercessor

Just before the close of human probation God will be searching for intercessors. The climate in the church will be so ill that “truth faileth.” Those that resist the wickedness will be marked for persecution. “He that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey.” In these ways the final scenes will resemble the stories of Numbers where the wicked people wished to kill Joshua, Caleb, Aaron, and Moses.

And like at that time, God will be greatly displeased. He tests the love of the few faithful with a call to intercession. At first in His search he finds “no man” doing the work. Then He takes matters into His own hand. A short time after this He dons the garments of vengeance. This signals the end of His intercession and the beginning of His judgments.

“And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment. And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke. According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies.” Isaiah 59:14-18.

God “wondered.” He wonders at our coldness. With such abundant evidence that we should intercede scattered through the types and prophecies of our time, how have his few faithful neglected the spirit of intercessory prayer? Their tardiness on this point is remarkable. And so God, for His own sake, pours upon his people a “spirit of grace and of supplications.” Zechariah 12:10. That is the work that He is doing now, through a million means, and this article among them.

The gift of the spirit comes with the gift of prayer, and then brings an ever augmenting tide of power as those prayers are answered and the spirit is poured out without measure.

And all this happens just a short time before God renders “fury to his adversaries.”

More than Prayer

There is a danger that a reader might feel relieved to know that his responsibility towards his erring church can be discharged on his knees in the privacy of his own home. This is not entirely true.

Consider the case of the Jacobites setting up a monarchy. When Israel had tired of taking directions straight from a prophet and demanded a king, they were virtually rejecting God's sovereignty. Their decision was followed by awful omens of impending judgment.

They came to Samuel and asked him to pray for them. Perhaps they had read the story of Job. Listen to the prophet's response:

“And Samuel said unto the people, ‘Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart; And turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain. For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name’s sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people. *Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.*” I Samuel 12:20-25

Samuel understood his responsibility to be two-fold. He was to intercede. This was his service to the Lord and to cease from praying for the erring people would be to sin “against the Lord.”

He was also to instruct. Only by faithfully teaching could he undo the damage that Satan had done by the work of deception. Moses and Samuel, modelers of victorious prayer, are both noted for their work of educating the people.

The Limit to the Power of Intercessory Prayer

Moses and Samuel are mentioned by God as champions in the work of praying for the church. But Samuel 12:25 (above) expresses a limit to the power of their intercessory prayer. “But if you shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed.”

The same limit is expressed in the New Testament. The familiar promise that “if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us” is given in the context of intercessory prayer. It is God's will that that His erring people be spared. But there is something we could ask that is not “according to His will.” That is forgiveness for an individual's presumptuous sin.⁵

“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.” I John 5:14-16.

Moses and Samuel are used by the prophet Jeremiah to emphasize this point. Jeremiah reasons that even these great mediators would be unable to avert the judgments pending over the presumptuous sins of King Manasseh.

Then said the LORD unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth. And it shall come to pass, if they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them, Thus saith the LORD; Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity. And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the LORD: the sword to slay, and

⁵ It is not within the scope of this essay to prove that presumptuous sin is the sin “unto death.” But a study of the Old Testament will lead to this conclusion. John apparently expected his readers to know what the sin “unto death” was from an Old Testament source, for he did not explain it here. See, for example, Numbers 15:30-36 and Dt. 17:2.

the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy. And I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem. Jeremiah 15:1-4.

But these verses can not be understood to be a token of final rejection. This has been the logical mistake of many who have entered a separationist movement. They have understood God's threatenings of certain judgement, His appeals to "cast them out of my sight," as proof that the body will never again be in God's favor.

But a further reading of Jeremiah 15, to verse 11, reveals that a remnant among the doomed ones would escape the judgments falling on the rest.

"The LORD said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant; verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil and in the time of affliction."

God's judgments also have a limit. And though God professes to be "weary of repenting" from His promised judgments we can be sure that his "mercies fail not." In the case of Manasseh this is strikingly revealed. In Jeremiah 15 the king's sins are made the cause of judgments that could not be averted by intercessory prayer. But a time came when, under the suffering of those judgments, Manasseh was humbled and turned from his presumptuous sins. Then he prayed for himself.

"Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, And prayed unto him: and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God. . . . And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel." 2 Chronicles 33:11-16.

This essay was introduced with a study of Numbers 14. The same limits to intercessory prayer are revealed there. Moses' prayer prevented the immediate obliteration of the entire nation. They did not, however, prevent the death of the faithless ones in the wilderness. The prayers preserved the nation, but not the rebels. They saved God's chosen people by giving the innocent time to grow and the guilty time to u-turn. See Numbers 14:20-35.

Gleanings from Model Prayers

Jesus let his disciples know that he was praying for them. So did Paul. The knowledge that they had someone who cared enough to intercede on their behalf carried its own blessing.

But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. Luke 22:32

Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates. 2 Corinthians 13:7

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; Philippians 1:9

Where the prayers of Moses, Samuel, and Job were particularly for the sparing of human life, Jesus and Paul extended the hand of faith still further. Jesus prayed that Peter would not make shipwreck of faith. Paul prayed that his disciples in Corinth would "do no evil," but rather "that which is honest." He prayed

for the Philippians that their “love may abound yet more and more.” He prayed that their love would be intelligent and applied with discretion.

What else might we request when praying for our dear ones? In the longest recorded prayer of Jesus he prayed that the Father would keep the disciples through the subduing glories of Divine Character, “through thine own name.”⁶

Interestingly, Jesus prayed uniquely for His disciples and said, by way of contrast, “I pray not for the world.” This seems related to the injunction of John “I say not that you should pray for” life for those who are living in presumptuous sin. Christ did pray for worldly soldiers that knew “not what” they were doing. But here in John 17 He prayed for the church of all ages, for future believers.

Have we prayed for future believers? We have been blessed by Christ’s prayer, in John 17, for us. The larger theme of that prayer was for believer’s unity. It might seem to us almost vain to pray for something that is so dependant on the cooperation of men. But we are not wise. Jesus invested in prayer energy in requesting unity and we do well to do the same.

His prayer for unity was, in fact, a prayer for the benefit of the world. He prayed that the disciples would be one so that the world would be won. The world was dependant on the spiritual improvement of the church, and to this end Jesus prayed.

Here are key elements from the prayer.

“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me. . . . Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; . . . that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” John 17:9-24.⁷

Jesus’ prayed for the world in a more direct manner when on the cross.

“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.” Luke 23:34

We, harsh and vindictive as we have chosen to be, might differ from the apostles regarding which sins are sins of ignorance and candidates for intercession of the Luke 23 variety.

Did the soldiers know they were killing a man? That they were beating him? That their mockery was cruel? Yes, they knew those things. But they did not comprehend the awful significance of what they were doing.

In some ways they were like the Jewish leaders. The Sanhedrin understood that it was putting a man to death by means ill according with justice. The members knew that Jesus was kind and that he was being ill treated during the trial. They had even been convicted that He was the Messiah. But this conviction had faded away from many of them. Could we say of them that they did what they did through *ignorance*?

Peter could. And he was able to win many of them to Jesus.

“And now, brethren, I [know] that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.” Acts 3:17

⁶ It is apparent that the pronunciation of the name is not its keeping quality. For evidence that character is signified here by the word “name” see Ex. 34:4-6. Feel free to write for more evidence on this topic. It is not within the scope of the present essay.

⁷ Much of this prayer is missing from this summary. Not one sentence of it is without significance. We are study and understand this prayer.

This generous spirit marks other model intercessors of the Old Testament—Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel. Many have marked how they were willing to identify themselves with their fallen brothers. The fact that many have noticed it does not make it less important.

The story of Daniel's life typifies the experience of the last generation. Outside of his written prophecies, the largest portion of Daniel's words in the Bible are devoted to intercessory prayer. Consider the following excerpts⁸ from that prayer and their bearing on how we should pray in our generation.

Daniel's prayer was initiated by an intelligent study of the prophetic future of the church and by a realization that the prophetic destiny was in danger of being delayed or worse.

“I Daniel understood . . .the word . . . to Jeremiah the prophet, that [God] would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.”

The prophet adopted a dress and diet, “with fasting and sackcloth and ashes,” that reflected his deep sorrow over the sins of the nation—then prayed a prayer that he called “my confession.”

“O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.”

Adventist should have little difficulty understanding the confession. It alludes to the promise in the Second Commandment and admits that we can expect no blessing from that promise. We have “rebelled” by ignoring God's requirements. More than this, we have not listened to the prophets who spoke for God.

Daniel goes on to confess the righteousness of the judgments that have befallen his church.

O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him.

The rights of possession are the subject of this portion of the prayer. To the Lord belongs “righteousness.” He possesses righteousness. We do not. Then it is His righteousness and not our own. We, on the contrary, possess shame. We blush at the evidence that we have rebelled as evidenced by the scattered condition of the holy people. Our leaders should be ashamed, prays Daniel, that the bodies under their direction have sinned. But again, in contrast to our armful of shame, God has a supply of mercy and forgiveness. He possesses these traits “though we have rebelled against him.”

Prayers of this nature, confessing that God's mercy is the source of our Righteousness, and acknowledging our shameful behavior as a church, have power. Blame is not, by Daniel, focused on a few. Rather, it is spread evenly over the face of the scattered body. Those in each nation, with those remaining in the land, and even those remaining in the city, those in leadership and those of age, and those that have followed and been begotten by them, all our guilty. Daniel has made his point in prayer, but unlike us in our lazy petitions, his continues to develop these disturbing truths.

Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the

⁸ See the appendix for the entire prayer.

oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.

As the Adventist church we have also been given a number of curses, if you will, that threaten us as a body. Our institutions are threatened with fire...and some have burned. Our wandering time on earth has been threatened to be lengthened by many more years because of "insubordination." Daniel's prayer connects the fulfilling of threatened judgments with the way "all Israel" relates to the "prophets."

Their calls to holy living are an exposition of the law of God. The faithful in Zion know enough of their own course to prevent them from taking the label "faithful" on themselves. They realize that "all we like sheep have gone astray." This is the burden of the phrase "even by departing." Rather than excusing a man because he falls like everyone else, Daniel's prayer condemns everyone for falling like a man.

And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem.

This is yet to be fulfilled in the Adventist case; but as it will be fulfilled according to Ezekiel 9, and as it will be fulfilled after probation has ceased, now is certainly the time to admit that we deserve it and pray to be spared. To not pray is to heap up further guilt. That is the next point in Daniel's prayer.

As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice.

While we pray that God will spare others, we ought to pray for two things for ourselves. First, that we might turn from our iniquities. Repentance is a gift, and asking for it is most appropriate. Second, that we might understand God's truth. Truth is God's, and if we are to have an understanding of it, it must come as a gift.

Daniel acknowledges that our misunderstandings and foolish ideas are a direct judgment related to our sins. So do Paul and Jesus. "For there must also be heresies among you that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." "For the fruits of the flesh are . . .heresies." "If any many will do my will, he will know of the doctrine." "Therefore God sent them strong delusion. . . that they might all be damned who had pleasure in unrighteousness." "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned." I Cor. 11:19, Gal. 5:20-21, John 7:17, 2 Thes. 2:11. (check these references **)

Said another way, the divisions and disagreements over truth in our church are, themselves, evidence of judgments and give us reason to pray that God will spare us from the widening delusions.

And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.

The logic of this passage might baffle those unacquainted with one great principal of grace...where sin abounds, grace does abound even more. Daniel prays that, according to God's righteousness, the Divine anger might be turned from the Holy Mountain. This righteousness, that pardons, is God's "goodness" in Romans 2 that leads us to repentance. God's mercy is righteous.

And he should exercise his mercy for his own sake. He should raise up the desolate cause of present truth because it is His own cause. So Daniel prays “for the Lord’s sake.” He means the same as we ought to mean (though we are more often thoughtless when saying it) when we pray “in Jesus’ name, Amen.” The formulation of the words has no power, but the heartfelt intention to honor God’s kingdom for God’s sake with God’s power brings answers to prayer.

Daniel’s prayer closes with an earnest appeal to the Holy One to take an active role in setting everything right. Our prayers might better echo the energy and fervency of Daniel’s. It is *not* the “effectual lackadaisical” prayer of the righteous man that does much.

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. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.” Daniel 9:1-17

Nehemiah’s and Ezra’s Prayers

It is interesting that, of all the times in earth’s history that could have been connected to the judgment by a time prophecy, God chose the period of Jerusalem’s reconstruction under Ezra and Nehemiah, two of the men that modeled intercessory prayer.⁹

The judgment-time experience of heart-searching is connected with prayer in Joel 2.

And Daniel 9, the location of Daniel’s model prayer, is the one that points us to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah while providing the needed starting point for the judgment’s time prophecy.

The prayers of Nehemiah and Ezra seem to have initiated a reversal in the course of Jewish apostasy and to have brought a nationwide revival. Compare the elements of these prayers, found in the appendix, with those of Daniel and Moses. A few excerpts are given here:

I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven ... that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: Let thine ear now be attentive [to] the prayer of thy servant . . . I . . . confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father’s house. . .

We have dealt very corruptly against thee . . . Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst . . . "If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments . . . will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen. . ."

Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power . . . O Lord, I beseech thee, [listen] to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. Neh 1:5-11, *excerpts*.

O my God, I am ashamed . . . for our iniquities are increased over our head . . . Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day . . . [and] have been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands . . .

And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us . . . a little reviving in our bondage. For . . . our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us . . .

And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments . . . by thy servants the prophets, saying, "The land . . . is an unclean land . .

⁹ The 2300 days could have been 1810 days dated from Stephen’s stoning. They could have been 1306 days from the opening of papal supremacy. They could have been anchored to any one of hundreds of events, but they were anchored to this period of earth’s history.

. Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth . . . that ye may be strong . . . "

And after all that is come . . . for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, . . . Should we again break thy commandments? . . . wouldest not thou be angry with us . . . so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?

O LORD God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped . . . [yet] we cannot stand before thee because of this. Neh 9:5-15, *excerpts*.

Appendix A – Three Model Prayers

"I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:

And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.

To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.

And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice.

And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.

Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. 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. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name." Daniel 9:1-17

And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: 6 Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.

We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses. 8 Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: 9 But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.

Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. 11 O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer. Neh 1:5-11

And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God, 6 And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. 7 Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day. And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. 9 For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem.

And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments, 11 Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness. 12 Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever. 13 And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this; 14 Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?

O LORD God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this. Neh 9:5-15

Appendix B – Short list of passages related to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit

Hosea 5:14-6:3
Joel 2
Jeremiah 5:23-25
Luke 11:13
Acts 5:32

Appendix C – Three statements from the Spirit of Prophecy related to revival and prayer

HM 11-01-90

It is a case of life or death with us. We have been stricken with spiritual paralysis, and every one needs the help of the Great Physician. He alone can reach our case. He is only waiting to be invited by us with earnest heart, with sincere desire. Nothing is wanting but a preparation of heart; we are to clear away the rubbish, open the door, and invite Jesus to come in and abide with us. Simple, earnest, believing prayer always brings him to our side as a mighty helper. He says to us, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." He longs to come in; he is only waiting for us to prepare the way, to open the door, and he will come in.

A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer. When churches are revived, it is because some individual seeks earnestly for the blessing of God. He hungers and thirsts after God, and asks in faith, and receives accordingly. He goes to work in earnest, feeling his great dependence upon the Lord, and souls are aroused to seek for a like blessing, and a season of refreshing falls upon the hearts of men.

Many are weary of their half-hearted service. Their souls cry out after the living God. They cannot be satisfied with a form of godliness; they long for the deep movings of the Holy Spirit. Let the weary, discouraged one cry, as did Jacob, for the Comforter. Let him lay bare his soul in the secret place before God. Let him with loathing put away soul-defilement. The work is between him and his God.

God is at work; he doeth wonders; and although he is high and lifted up, prayer will reach his throne. He that is turning and overturning, he that can do marvelous things, will regard the contrite prayer of faith from the humblest of his children.

RH 03-13-88

When churches are revived, it is because some individual seeks earnestly for the blessing of God. He hungers and thirsts after God, and asks in faith, and receives accordingly. He goes to work in earnest, feeling his great dependence upon the Lord, and souls are aroused to seek for a like blessing, and a season of refreshing falls on the hearts of men. The extensive work will not be neglected. The larger plans will be laid at the right time; but personal, individual effort and interest for your friends and neighbors, will accomplish much more than can be estimated. It is for the want of this kind of labor that souls for whom Christ died are perishing. One soul is of infinite value; for Calvary speaks its worth. One soul, won to the truth, will be instrumental in winning others, and there will be an ever-increasing result of blessing and salvation. Your work may accomplish more real good than the more extensive meetings, if they lack in personal effort. When both are combined, with the blessing of God, a more perfect and thorough work may be wrought; but if we can have but one part done, let it be the individual labor of opening the Scriptures in households, making personal appeals, and talking familiarly with the members of the family, not about things of little importance, but of the great themes of redemption. Let them see that your heart is burdened for the salvation of souls. [Also in ChS 121; GW 337, 1892 ed]

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Had they known that they were putting to torture One who had come to save the sinful race from eternal ruin, they would have been seized with remorse and horror. But their ignorance did not remove their guilt; for it was their privilege to know and accept Jesus as their Saviour. Some of them would yet see their sin, and repent, and be converted. Some by their impenitence would make it an impossibility for the prayer of Christ to be answered for them. Yet, just the same, God's purpose was reaching its fulfillment. Jesus was earning the right to become the advocate of men in the Father's presence.

That prayer of Christ for His enemies embraced the world. It took in every sinner that had lived or should live, from the beginning of the world to the end of time. Upon all rests the guilt of crucifying the Son of God. To all, forgiveness is freely offered. "Whosoever will" may have peace with God, and inherit eternal life.