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DANIEL 9:4-14 ACTS OF PRAYER

⁴ *I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed:*

“O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, ⁵ we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. ⁶ We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

⁷ *“Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame—the men of Judah and people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. ⁸ O LORD, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. ⁹ The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; ¹⁰ we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. ¹¹ All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you.*

“Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you. ¹² You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing upon us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem. ¹³ Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. ¹⁴ The LORD did not hesitate to bring the disaster upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him.

One of the acronyms used for a standard approach to prayer is “A.C.T.S.” This pattern helps us to maintain a proper balance in our conversations with God. It is easy for us to fall into the trap of presenting our laundry list of petitions to God and leave it at that. This is not the biblical pattern for prayer in the Old and New Testaments and neither is it truly relational in nature. As Jesus taught us in the “Lord’s Prayer,” our prayers should begin with the salutation that acknowledges who God is. The “A” of the acronym stands for *adoration*. Once we articulate that God is great, awesome, steadfast and faithful in love and mercy, we can see our own spiritual frailty in bold relief. This should lead us into the “C,” *confession*.

As Daniel reads the Prophet Jeremiah, he realizes that the predicament that the Hebrew people find themselves is the outcome of their corporate disregard for God and his statutes. The goodness of God includes his integrity, and his integrity includes his justice. It is only his mercy-mediated justice that allows the Israelites to even exist after their apostasy. The first step toward restitution of our relationship with God is acknowledging that he is good and we are not. The two sides of that coin are *adoration* and *confession*. Only then are we in a position to receive God’s grace (for which we respond with *thanksgiving*, “T”). Only then, with the assurance of our proper relationship being restored, are we in the position to petition God for our needs and desires (the “S” for *supplication*).

Dear Father, in the cluttered and busy circumstances of my life I so often jump over the slow and hard work of relationship-mending and directly to

my “needs.” May the fruit of your Spirit which is patience be manifested in my relationship with you so that I might be concerned first for the health of our relationship and only then naturally articulate my petitions to you. Help me to be more concerned with loving you than myself. Amen.