

## Daniel's Prayer of Confession

**Text:** Daniel 9:1-19

### Introduction:

1. Daniel 9 is one of “three great chapter nines” in the Word of God – Ezra 9, Nehemiah 9 & Daniel 9. Each contain a fervent prayer of confession from a man of God on behalf of the people of God.
2. Daniel sets a powerful example for individuals, churches and nations to follow. In the early days of America, pastors and even political leaders prayed prayers similar to this. At least 16 times, the Continental Congress proclaimed days of fasting, repentance, and prayer, “and the entire American community repaired to their various churches on such days.” (Cloud)
3. Humility and confession of sin at the heart of what God requires for us to experience His reviving power (2 Chr. 7:14).
4. We will study this great prayer of Daniel under 6 headings.

### I. The Occasion of Daniel's Prayer (Vs. 1)

#### A. The Season (Vs. 1a)

1. “In the first year of Darius” = the Babylonian Empire, in fulfillment of prophecy, has now passed off the world stage and Medo-Persia has taken its place.
2. This would be around 538 B.C. Daniel was carried away as a young man in 605 B.C. Assuming Daniel was in his late teens, this would mean Daniel was in his early eighties.

#### B. The Sovereign (Vs. 1b)

1. “Darius the son of Ahasuerus” = the identity of the king given
2. “which was made king” = significant note. Darius had this region delegated to him from Cyrus who was ruling at the same time (Dan. 6:28). We are introduced to this Darius in Daniel 6.

#### C. The Seer (Vs. 2a)

Think for a moment about the man Daniel at this moment in history.

1. Prayer and the reading and study of God's Word are still the priority for elderly Daniel, even in the sunset years of his life.
2. There is a challenge here for the Senior Saints!

### II. The Motivation of Daniel's Prayer (Vs. 2)

What was it that motivated Daniel to pray this way?

#### A. The Perusal of the Scriptures (Vs. 2a)

1. “I Daniel understood by books” = this is a reference to the O.T. Scriptures. The prophecy of Jeremiah and the law of Moses are mentioned specifically (See Vs. 2 & 11).
2. “Bible reading and prayer stand and fall together.” (Butler)

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3. The order is important. As we read the Word, God speaks to us and then we respond by speaking to Him in prayer. Eugene Patterson, in a book on pastoral ministry, describes prayer this way, *“Prayer is never the first word. It is always the second word. God has the first word. Prayer is answering speech. It is response.”*

### B. The Promises of the Scriptures (Vs. 2b)

1. The specifics of the prophecy
  - a. There was a specific prophecy relating to the captivity of the children of Israel in Babylon that particularly captivated Daniel’s attention and drove him to his knees. The prophecies Daniel read were:
    - i. Jeremiah 25:11 *“And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon **seventy years.**”*
    - ii. Jeremiah 29:10-13 *“For thus saith the LORD, That after **seventy years** be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”*
  - b. Daniel approaches this prophecy literally. He expected a literal fulfilment of the plain statements of Scripture. This is the correct approach to Bible prophecy.
2. The stimulation from the prophecy
  - a. Daniel knew that prayer would play an important part in seeing this prophecy fulfilled. “God’s promises are intended, not to supersede, but to excite and encourage, our prayers.” (Henry) Jeremiah’s prophecy, Daniels Prayer and Cyrus’ Proclamation were all a part of God’s plan and purpose (Denis Lyle).
  - b. Daniel knew that repentance from sin would be a necessary qualification to securing God’s blessing (See Vs. 4b). “What the prayer plainly discloses, that Israel’s spiritual unreadiness (because of sin) stands in the way of having the Lord do for His people what He had promised. Israel is still largely impenitent. She may be in distress and deeply humbled by God, but she has not humbled herself under the mighty hand of God. Consequently, her exaltation is being deferred.” (Leupold)

## III. The Devotion of Daniel’s Prayer (Vs. 3)

### A. The Seriousness of his Praying (Vs. 3a)

1. “I set my face unto the Lord God” = Daniel set his face to seek God’s face. Daniel was earnest about this season of prayer. He was

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purposeful, focused and put aside other things to devote himself to the exercise of prayer.

2. Note: While it is important to maintain a spirit of prayer at all times (1 Thess. 5:17), and to pray the quick “Nehemiah style prayers” on the job (Neh. 2:4), it is also vital that like Daniel, we set aside specific times for extended, earnest prayer.
3. Robert Murray McCheyne, that saintly Scottish Presbyterian minister said this, “What a man is on his knees before God, that he is and no more.”

### B. The Humbleness of his Praying (Vs. 3b)

There are three accompaniments to Daniel’s praying that reveal his deep humility before God. He reveals his humility through his...

1. Fasting – purpose of fasting is not to try and force the hand of an unwilling God but rather the deliberate setting aside of bodily appetites for serious prayer to a God who is willing to answer. Fasting is mentioned at least 31 times in Scripture.
2. Clothing – two specifics are mentioned. These were outward displays of an inner heart attitude.
  - a. Sackcloth – a course, rough, dark cloth made of goat’s hair worn to show mourning, repentance and humility. (Cloud) Some examples:
    - i. Hezekiah (2. Kings 19:1) – “...*he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth*”
    - ii. Mordecai (Es. 4:1) – “...*put on sackcloth with ashes...*”
    - iii. King of Nineveh – “...*covered him with sackcloth and sat in ashes.*” (Jonah 3:6)
  - b. Ashes – often connected with the wearing of sackcloth and for the same purpose. For example
3. Note: Remember that at this time Daniel held a high position in the government of Babylon under Darius (see chapter 6). He would have had access to the finest food and clothing as Darius’ First Minister, but he lays it all aside and humbles himself before his God. This is even more significant when we consider Daniel’s blameless life. Daniel is probably the most righteous Israelite at this time and yet he humbles himself and confesses his personal sins and the sins of the nation.

## IV. The Adoration of Daniel’s Prayer (Vs. 4)

Daniel’s opening words in this prayer are an expression of adoration to his God. He refers to...

### A. The Preciousness of God – “the LORD my God” (Vs. 4a)

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1. Daniel could approach God because of his personal relationship with Him. Throughout this prayer Daniel refers to God as “our God” (Vs. 9, 10, 13, 14, 15 & 17) and “my God” (Vs. 4, 18, 19).
2. We approach God based on our relationship to Him as our Heavenly Father.

### **B. The Greatness of God – “the great and dreadful God” (Vs. 4b)**

1. ‘great’ = God is the Almighty, Sovereign Lord. “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.” (Psalm 145:3) The word ‘unsearchable’ means “that which cannot be searched or explored; inscrutable; hidden; mysterious.” (Webster)
2. ‘dreadful’ = means “to be feared.” Word is translated ‘reverend’ in Psalm 111:9. God is worth of reverence and godly fear. We often use the word ‘dreadful’ to describe something evil. But God is not dreadful in wickedness but dreadful in holiness!

### **C. The Faithfulness of God – “keeping the covenant and mercy” (Vs. 4c)**

1. God is a covenant keeping God. This gave Daniel confidence to bring the matter of Israel’s restoration to the Lord in prayer.
2. Jeremiah extolled the faithfulness of God in the words, “...*great is thy faithfulness.*” (Lam. 3:23)

## **V. The Confession of Daniel’s Prayer (Vs. 5-15)**

Two dominant themes can be discerned in this confession. Very often they are both contrasted in the one verse – the sinfulness of Israel and the righteousness of God. That is biblical confession in a nutshell! Note 5 things Daniel confessed about Israel:

### **A. The Depravity of Israel (Vs. 5a)**

1. The Admission of their Sin (Vs. 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15)
  - a. Daniel frequently and humbly admits the exceeding sinfulness of Israel in this confession.
  - b. For example: “we have sinned” (Vs. 5); “have committed iniquity” (Vs. 5); “have done wickedly” (Vs. 5); “have rebelled” (Vs. 5); “trespassed against thee” (Vs. 7); “we have sinned against thee” (Vs. 8); “we have rebelled against him” (Vs. 9); “all Israel have transgressed thy law” (Vs. 11); “we have sinned against him” (Vs. 11); “we obeyed not his voice” (Vs. 14); “we have sinned” (Vs. 15); “we have done wickedly” (Vs. 15).
2. The Description of their Sin  
Look at the six words Daniel uses to describe their sin:
  - a. Sin = to miss the mark, come short
  - b. Iniquity = to be crooked, perverse. The bent of our sinful nature.
  - c. Wickedness = to be wrong, to violate

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- d. Rebellion = to revolt. Hebrew word always translated 'rebel' or 'rebellion'
- e. Trespass = treachery, unfaithfulness, breach of trust
- f. Transgression = to pass beyond, to cross over. E.g. "trespasses will be prosecuted"

### **B. The Departure of Israel (Vs. 5b, 11)**

- 1. They had departed from the 'precepts', 'judgments' and 'law' of God.
- 2. The word 'apostasy' means "a departure."

### **C. The Disobedience of Israel (Vs. 6, 10)**

- 1. Every class of people included in this sin (Vs. 6) (See also Vs. 8)
- 2. Their stubborn resistance to God's men was ultimately a refusal to hear God's voice.
- 3. Illustration: Paul gave thanks for the attitude of the Thessalonians towards the Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13)

### **D. The Dismay of Israel (Vs. 7-9)**

- 1. "righteousness belongeth unto thee" = Daniel acknowledges that God is righteous in His judgments. He exalts God and humbles man.
- 2. "unto us confusion of faces" = means shame, disgrace, reproach. It refers to "shame which reflects itself in the countenance, not because of disgraceful circumstances, but in the consciousness of well-deserved suffering." (Keil & Delitzsch) True confession means I acknowledge that I deserve the chastisement I receive from God for my sins.

### **E. The Discipline of Israel (Vs. 11b-14)**

- 1. Daniel acknowledges that they were being chastised for their sins in accordance with the law of God.
- 2. In particular he makes reference to "the oath...of Moses". The word 'oath' means curse and refers to the list of curses from Deut. 28 that God had warned the nation they would experience if they rebelled against God.
- 3. Gods judgment had been directed against the people (Vs. 7b) and against Jerusalem (Vs. 12b). Lamentations records the heart-breaking picture of what happened in Jerusalem.
- 4. He acknowledges their lack of repentance (Vs. 13)

## **VI. The Intercession of Daniel's Prayer (Vs. 16-19)**

### **A. The Focus of his Intercession (Vs. 16-18a)**

- 1. That God would turn away his anger from Jerusalem.
- 2. That God would cause His face to shine upon his sanctuary.

### **B. The Foundation (basis) of his Intercession (Vs. 17b; 18b)**

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1. He pleads on the basis of the Lord's glory (Vs. 17b; 19a). Daniel's primary concern is the glory of God.
2. He pleads on the basis of the Lord's mercies (Vs. 18b)
  - a. His mercies are great and numerous in number
  - b. Psalm 86:15 *"But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and **plenteous in mercy and truth.**"*
  - c. Psalm 103:8 *"The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and **plenteous in mercy.**"*

### C. The Fervency of his Intercession (Vs. 19)

1. "O Lord...O my God" = Daniel uses 'O' repeatedly in this prayer conveying his passion and fervency for the Lord to answer. We have lost the 'O' out of our praying today.
2. Daniel says "O Lord" and "O my God" at least 11 times in this prayer (Vs. 4, 7, 8, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19). This is praying from the heart!

### Conclusion:

1. Is prayer and Bible reading a priority in our Christian lives?
2. Does the study of prophetic truth stir us to pray?
3. When was the last time we paused and really humbled ourselves before God over our personal sins, the sins of the nation and the sins of the church.