

Richard Clarke: 1 August 2021

(Sermon Summary)

Daniel chapter 9: Daniel pleads for his people

Context

The events of this chapter take place in 537 BC. Sixty-eight years previously, the teenage Daniel had been taken as a captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar had subsequently destroyed Jerusalem and taken the rest of the people into exile.

Now Daniel is an old man in his eighties. He has been promoted to high office - the equivalent of Prime Minister - and has endured many trials, but throughout his life he has remained faithful to God. Three times a day he prays, facing Jerusalem, the city he has never forgotten.

Despite his responsibilities Daniel always made time to read and study God's Word. As he read the prophecy of Jeremiah something grabbed his attention. Jeremiah had prophesied that the Israelites would serve the king of Babylon for seventy years (Jer. 25:8-12) and these years are now completed. However, there is a condition attached to God's promise; the people must call upon Him (Jer. 25:13).

The people were still not seeking God (v13) so Daniel alone set himself to pray for the exiles. The promises of God are a bit like a cheque that we have to cash: we need to plead in prayer before we can receive them.

Daniel embarked on an extraordinary time of prayer. He fasted, wearing sackcloth to show that he was serious, mourning and grieving. He may well have had to ask the King for leave of absence from his work so that he could do this. There are times in our lives when we may have to pray in a special way: times of crisis, or when we realise we are no longer close to the Lord. We may have to ask family and friends to relieve us of responsibilities so that we can make time to pray.

What can we learn from Daniel's prayer?

This prayer has seven ingredients.

1. Daniel is **single-minded** and determined to meet with God.
2. He comes armed with the **promises** of God. We pray for God's will to be done and His promises reveal His will. If we are weary, "Come to me, all you who are burdened and

heavy laden, and I will give you rest". If we long for fruit in our ministry "My word shall not return to me void" (Isaiah 55:11). God has promised to build His church.

3. Daniel knows the **character of God** so comes reverently (v4). He knows that God is merciful (vv9, 18).
4. Daniel spends a lot of time in **confession**. He identifies with the people whose sin has led to the exile and acknowledges that they deserve to be punished. He has a **humble and contrite heart**. Daniel reminds God in v15 how He has rescued a rebellious people before, through the Exodus. This is the turning point in his prayer.
5. He makes a **specific request** (v15), asking God to bring the people back to Jerusalem.
6. He uses **convincing arguments**. Daniel is getting closer to God as he prays, and becomes bolder. He asks God to act for the sake of His own name and glory.
7. He prays with **urgency**, making an impassioned plea.

So what stops us from praying like this?

- Do we know God well enough?
- Do we know God's promises well enough?
- Do we care enough for the honour of God's name?

Even as Daniel started to pray, God was already hearing and answering (v23). God answers because He loves His people.