

**Daniel's Prayer, Part 3**  
**Daniel 9**  
**ABC 2/2/20**

The Bible records many great prayers. Some of the most prominent come in the form of psalms &, of all these, David's heartbroken, soul-sick prayer of Ps 51 may be the most haunting. In a desperate bid to cover up his sin, David commits more sin. When he's confronted with his sin & sinfulness, he's convicted & it's in that frame of mind that he prays & expresses his sorrow & repentance & seeks God's mercy. While the circumstances & specifics of David's sin may not be ours, we can all identify with his alarm as he realizes the depths of his depravity, with his shame as he grapples with how he's failed God & man, & with his desperate hope as he pleads with God to extend undeserved favor to so great a sinner. In that way this prayer speaks to all of us & gives us all words to speak to God. Ps 51 is a prayer we can use to pray back God's Word to Him. Of course, reciting prayers by rote or without thought don't accomplish anything. There's no magic there. The joy & power of prayer is praying according to God's Word & God's will & we're to do so fervently, being devoted to prayer. The great prayer we've been looking at these last few weeks is from Daniel 9. Today we'll get to the heart of it & wrap up our time in it. Daniel believed in the power of prayer because he believed in the power of God. He pleaded with God on behalf of his people. We must do the same. We can learn much from Daniel & his example of intercessory prayer. His prayer pours out of him like a passionate symphony; its themes of praise & confession rise & fall as it works its way to the finale of petition to the Lord. Let's stand, read it once again, pray, & get after it. **4-19** PRAY

**1. Prayer includes confession.** Clearly, confession is the majority of this prayer. Daniel wants God to do His work. He wants God to restore Israel, & God had clearly said He would. Daniel wants to see Jerusalem & the temple rebuilt. But before he ever gets to praying for any of that, what does he do? Before he makes his requests he confesses. He humbly sees himself in the proper perspective, as a sinner needing God's grace, mercy, compassion, & forgiveness. It's easy to feel sorry for our sin because we don't like the consequences it brings. But there's a difference between feeling miserable because sin has made our life wretched & feeling broken because our sin has

offended the holiness of God & brought reproach to Him. Daniel's confession, biblical confession, true confession is God-centered. The issue isn't admitting we've made our life miserable. The issue is admitting there's something much worse than our misery, namely, the offended holiness & glory of our great God. **5**

That's saying it every way you can say it. We sinned & missed the mark & wandered from Your path; we committed iniquity & acted perversely distorting God's law; we acted wickedly & knowingly did what we knew was wrong; we rebelled & defied Your authority; & we turned aside from Your commandments & ordinances. 5 ways to say, *We're sinful*. In vs 6 he says they haven't listened or obeyed God's spokesmen, the prophets. Therefore, **to us**, vss 7-8, belongs **open shame**. Vs 9, **We have rebelled**. Vs 10, **nor have we obeyed**, & it keeps going on like that. **11**

He says, *we've suffered great calamity (12), but even in the midst of it*, vs 13, **We have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our iniquity & giving attention to Your truth**. He keeps going & says, *this is what it says in the Law of Moses. God, You've already told us this. We had fair warning*. Disregard for God's law is the root from which all of Israel's troubles sprouted. According to the Mosaic covenant, God promised to bless them if they kept His law (Dt 28:1-14) & warned that He'd curse them if they didn't (28:15-68). Moses told them, **I call heaven & earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life & death, the blessing & the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you & your descendants, by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, & by holding fast to Him** (Dan 9:13-14). When we sin & things go bad in our life, don't blame God. It's not His fault. It's ours! Don't curse or question God. Sin brings its just reward. **14**

Then he sums it up at the end of vs 15, **We have sinned, we have been wicked**. Does this sound like your prayers? There's a whole bunch of confession going on here. Why does Daniel keep saying it & saying it & saying it in every possible way? Remember, this isn't like the Lord's Prayer which is a pattern to teach us to pray. Instead, this is an outpouring of what's in Daniel's heart & it's very personal. Daniel's saying, *We deserve the judgment we're getting. I agree, acknowledge, & affirm that's true. I'm not denying it. I know that's the case*. & that's the way it should be. Confession has many fruits. It's an acknowledging of our sinfulness so the Lord can purify us. & it's an

acknowledgement of our sinfulness so when God chastens us, we admit that we deserve it. Even though it's *we, we, we*, go over to vs 20a.

Our prayers are to be based on an understanding of our own unworthiness. Daniel didn't get all self-righteous & approach God like he was the only righteous one left. No, when God is at work in your life, repentance & confession become the norm. Daniel makes no excuses for their sin or for his sin. Not once does he blame the pagan Babylonians for leading them into sin. No finger pointing. No excuses. No rationalization at all. Is this the way we pray?

We must always realize when we pray that we have no right to ask in & of ourselves. We have no right to enter His presence in & of ourselves. There's nothing in us that makes us worthy to have an audience with God & expect to be answered, because we're sinners. We're sinners like Isaiah with unclean lips & we live in the midst of people of unclean lips (Isaiah 6). The foundation of prayer is that we don't deserve anything. It's beating our breast & calling, **God, be merciful to me, the sinner** (Lk 18:13). *I have sinned. I have committed iniquity. I have done wickedly. I have rebelled. I have turned aside. I haven't listened to the prophets. I haven't been faithful to the truth. To me belongs open shame* (7-8). The once proud Jews were now refugees, bearing the shame & consequences of their sins & the captivity that had come upon them. Vss 11-12 take us back to Dt 28 & the curses that God pronounced when they arrived in the land. He said, *If you don't obey Me, you're going to be cursed*. They hadn't obeyed & they were cursed as the righteous judgment of God fell upon them. All our prayers need to be built on this concept of confession & knowing we're worthy of nothing. *Oh God, I don't deserve anything. I'm a sinner. I'm a rebel. I just ask You to fulfill Your purpose, Your plan. Do what You promised to do. Restore Your people. I'm interceding on their behalf*. We must pray for the salvation of sinners. We must pray for the sanctification of the saints. We must pray that the truth of God may prevail in us. We must pray for all the needs of people around us. But at all times we're overwhelmingly aware of the fact that we don't do anything to earn an answer. It's all mercy. It's all grace. Confession is the ongoing, never stopping part of the life of Christians & it was a part of Daniel's prayers. When was the last time you confessed like Daniel does here? Is it part of your daily, ongoing prayer life? Praying without

ceasing includes confessing without ceasing. We've seen that prayer is generated by God's Word, grounded in God's will, characterized by fervency, identified with God's people, & built on confession.

**2. Prayers are dependent on God's character.** Daniel didn't allow his heart's desires to obscure the One he was coming before in prayer. & so Daniel began his prayer where we all should, by recognizing the greatness & goodness of God. Sometimes we approach God as if He were a stingy God who has to be persuaded or coerced into giving us anything. But Daniel knew the problem wasn't with God. God always keeps His word & promises. We pray our prayers of confession, call on God on behalf of His people, & intercede for the needs of ourselves & others, all because we believe God hears & responds, right? All prayer, then, is based on the character of God. Since we can't earn a hearing with God, what makes us think we have a right to come to Him? **4**

God is **great**. That means powerful. We pray to God because He's powerful enough to respond. He's not feeble nor weak. He can do whatever He pleases. He's the God in vs 15 who **brought His people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand**. It's wonderful to pray to a God who is all-powerful, isn't it? Wouldn't it be horrible to pray to a God who was only the 2<sup>nd</sup> most powerful deity & He had to work everything through some other more powerful being? What a hopeless situation that would be. But He is all-powerful. Besides that, He is **awesome**, KJV says **dreadful**. Don't take that wrong. It means God is majestic. He inspires awe & reverence. It means He's to be honored & glorified. He's to be exalted, lifted up, praised, & worthy of all our adoration & respect. He's the most powerful & He's the most majestic. Look what else. He **keeps His covenant**. Not only do we see His power & His majesty, but also His faithfulness. When God makes a promise, He keeps it. & He made a covenant with His people that He'd never forsake them, right? & if they repented, He'd forgive them; if they obeyed Him, He'd restore them. God always keeps His promises. We pray because we believe God has the power to fulfill it, because He is the most majestic One in the universe, & is worthy of our devotion & prayers. Why? Because He's a faithful God who will keep His promises. Notice also vs 4 says also says He is full of **lovingkindness**. That's the Hebrew word, *hesed*, which we find throughout the OT. It means *loyal love*. He will forgive because He loves. He

will grant us what we ask in His will because He loves. It's one thing to be powerful. It's something else to be majestic. It's especially wonderful to be faithful. But beyond belief is that He loves us. **For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life** (Jn 3:16). We don't comprehend the love of God but we are the beneficiaries of it. That's not all. In vs 7 Daniel says, **Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord**. It would be easy for Daniel to complain to God about Israel's problems. But he didn't think for a moment that God was being too hard on them. He knew God was completely righteous & any failure was on Israel's side, not God's. Daniel didn't make the slightest excuse for Israel's sins. He knew the fault belonged to them & them alone. We're prone to make excuses for our sin & often even make excuses in our confession of them. *Father, forgive me, but...* God is righteous. He's holy, holy, holy. He'll always do what is right & never do anything wrong. How wonderful to know that God can never do a wrong thing. No matter what He does, it's right. Isn't it great to have that kind of God? Never makes a mistake, never doesn't know what to do. Always right. Daniel continues in vs 9 & says, **To the Lord our God belong compassion & forgiveness**. Both **compassion & forgiveness** are plural in Hebrew suggesting God's repeated acts of mercy & pardon to His rebellious people.<sup>1</sup> This abundant mercy formed the basis of Daniel's request at the end of the prayer. Yes, God's great. Yes, He's awesome. Yes, He's holy. But He's also a faithful God who keeps His promise, a God of lovingkindness, a God of compassion, & a God of forgiveness. & He's a Savior. **15**

We must take the time to remember God's past mercies & be encouraged that He never changes (Heb 13:8). Daniel knew the reason God saved Israel from Egypt wasn't because Israel was so good but that God is. Ps 106:7-8 says, **Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; They did not remember Your abundant kindnesses, But rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea. Nevertheless He saved them for the sake of His name That He might make His power known**. Our prayers are sustained by the memory of past mercies. So we go to our great & awesome & holy God knowing He's also a God of lovingkindness. He's a God of compassion & forgiveness & a God who saves. That's the God we approach & converse with in our prayers. When we look at the cross of Jesus we

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<sup>1</sup> Ernest C Lucas, *Daniel*, p 238

see all of those things, don't we? We see His power, because on that cross He conquers sin & death & Satan & hell. That's power. As we look at the cross, we see His majesty, for there He is, in the eyes of the romans & Jews a victim, & yet He's controlling every single thing that's happening. **Truly this was the Son of God!** (Mt 27:54). He was majestic, even in dying. As we look at His cross we see His faithfulness. He said He would die for us. Even though in the Garden He agonized about it, He kept His promise. He's faithful. We look at the cross & see His love. He shouldn't have been there. We're the ones who should've been there. But because He loved, He took our place. We look at the cross & see His holiness. It's His holiness that put Him there. He couldn't just forgive sinners. He had to pay the price to deal with our sin. The penalty must be paid. We see His mercy & forgiveness there as well. All that God is to Daniel, God is to us. & Daniel knew it from God's dealings with His people. We know it from the cross. We see His power, His majesty, His faithfulness, His love, His holiness, His grace, & that's the basis of our prayers. I'm so glad we pray to a God who's all powerful & absolutely majestic & controls all the circumstances of the whole world. I'm so glad we pray to a God who's absolutely faithful to His children & who loves us. I'm glad we pray to a God who's utterly & absolutely holy & will always do right. & I'm glad to pray to a God who's gracious & forgives & forgives & forgives. It's God's character that gives Daniel the ground to stand on as he comes to Him in prayer. He knows that just as God is right to discipline His rebellious people, He's also eager to restore them when they come to Him in confession & repentance (cf Jer 29:10-14). But the contrast couldn't be starker between the faithful & holy God, who is true to all His promises, & the faithless & unholy people, who'd broken their commitments & rebelled against their God. I forget God's greatness, that He's the One who created all things out of nothing. He's the One who hung the stars in the heavens & assigned the seas their boundaries. I forget that He's the One who raises up world leaders & brings them down again. If I remembered God's greatness more, my prayer life would be transformed & much deeper. As we remember God's grace it should motivate us to fervent, passionate prayer. We can pray,

*Lord, I'm unfit to be Your ambassador, but You have called me & thrust me out to serve You. I can't stand for a moment in my strength & I have no words of my own to say. Lord, give me the strength to stand & the words to say for You. Accomplish Your purposes in this world through me, & through other sinners like me. Build this church, & your kingdom in this place, not because we are worthy—*

*far from it. Build Your kingdom here because Your name is worthy, & the people all around us need to see Your glory. They will never see it from our wisdom or strength; they will see Your glory only if You demonstrate it through taking flawed & tarnished people like us & making our lives extraordinary demonstrations of Your grace.<sup>2</sup>*

Isn't that good? Finally ...

### **7. The purpose of prayer is God's glory. 16**

Daniel's prayer was consumed with the glory of God, not with his own benefit & comfort or that of his countrymen. His purpose in prayer was to see God's work accomplished & God & His cause glorified. **17**

The point he says is God Himself & His glory. Daniel's not asking for his or his countrymen's sake. He's not asking for their comfort. No, the glory of God is the goal of his prayer & should be of ours as well. We want whatever glorifies Him. Daniel's saying,

*God, don't do this for us. Do it for you. You know what the people & the nations think of You because of us. They're saying You couldn't protect us. Your city & Your temple were destroyed. The land you gave us is desolate. Your people have been hauled off into captivity. God, that's not good for Your reputation. God, hear & answer this prayer. You promised to restore Your people. Your Word is at stake. Your name is at stake. Your reputation is at stake.*

Having poured out his sorrow, Daniel presents 2 main petitions to God, one negative (to remove His wrath) & one positive (to grant His forgiveness). Daniel pleads for God to let His face shine on His temple (cf Num 6:22-27). Why? Because the Jews have suffered enough & deserve God's blessing? Nope, not according to Daniel. Look how this prayer comes to its climax & conclusion in **18-19**.

Daniel cries out not for his or his people's sake but for the Lord's sake. In his prayer & in his life, Daniel's primary passion is the glory of God. Israel's hope didn't rest in what they had to offer God (sin, iniquity, rebellion) but in God Himself. The people of God are known by His name & God has an infinite zeal for His own name. He will not let it be reproached indefinitely. That's our deepest confidence. God is committed to God. God is committed with passion to the glory of His name & the truth of His reputation. So Daniel prays, *God, don't delay because we deserve it but because Your city & Your people are called by Your name. Your reputation is at stake. Do it for You! God,*

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<sup>2</sup> Iain M Duguid, *Daniel*, p 157

*vindicate Your name. Don't let Your name be smeared. Don't let our sin corrupt Your reputation.* This is a mature prayer. *Father, forgive us for Your sake.* The Psalmist calls upon God the same way. Ps 102:12-20,

**But You, O LORD, abide forever, & Your name to all generations. You will rise & have compassion on Zion; For it is time to be gracious to her, For the appointed time has come. Surely Your servants find pleasure in her stones & feel pity for her dust. So the nations will fear the name of the LORD & all the kings of the earth Your glory. For the LORD has built up Zion; He has appeared in His glory. He has regarded the prayer of the destitute & has not despised their prayer. This will be written for the generation to come, That a people yet to be created may praise the LORD. For He looked down from His holy height; From heaven the LORD gazed upon the earth, To hear the groaning of the prisoner, To set free those who were doomed to death.**

The Psalmist is saying, *God, when You come back & rebuild Your city, the people will look back & say, 'The Lord is great!'* Do you pray like that? Do you pray that God will do certain things in your life & in this church & in the lives of others that He might be glorified? In Jn 14 Jesus said, **Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be what? Glorified in the Son (13).** Daniel says, *We've sinned & brought reproach to & sullied Your name. Turn it around, God. Forgive us & restore the virtue & holiness & majesty of Your name in the eyes of the world.* It's God's reputation that's at stake & then a series of verbs brings this prayer to its climax. **O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen & take action! Do it, Lord.**

Daniel is a man of prayer & his consuming passion is the glory of God. Notice also the fervency & intensity of his words. 6x in 4 vss (15-19) he cries out, **O Lord.** Once he says, **O God** & another time, **O my God.**

Taking the prayer as a whole, we discover that everything Daniel says is based upon God's character:

You are great & awesome (4)  
 You always keep Your promises (4)  
 You are filled with lovingkindness (4)  
 You are righteous (7, 14)  
 You are compassionate & forgiving (9)  
 You have a great name (15)  
 You are a merciful God (18)

In some ways vs 18 is the theme of the whole prayer: **we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion.** That's crucial to see. So many times we pray because we somehow think we've earned the right by our good



behavior to ask God to bless us. Daniel chose just the opposite. *Lord, we don't deserve to be heard by You because we've sinned greatly against You. The only reason we come to You is because You are a God of love & grace.* To show the greatness of His grace & to vindicate the honor of His name, God must once again redeem His people & restore them to His favor. So Daniel prays with confidence that God would hear his prayer, show favor to his people, & restore His sanctuary. He realizes that Israel's return, restoration, & future blessings are contingent upon God's forgiveness. In this prayer, as it must have been in all of Daniel's prayers & should be in our prayers, sinful men cannot ask for anything but grace & mercy. Daniel's petition isn't on the basis of any merit of his own that he asks God to answer (18). Daniel doesn't claim anything. Instead he pleads for mercy, as any sinner should & must do.

2 quick thoughts of application: 1) Daniel's prayer ought to encourage all of us to pray boldly regarding whatever's on our hearts. God loves it when His children bring their needs to Him. When we come in faith, He won't turn us away. Daniel's prayer was enormous. He was asking for God to end the exile & allow an entire nation to return home. While our prayers may not be as large as that, if we have the same honesty & the same fervency, & if our prayers are in line with God's word & will, we may ask the Lord for whatever is on our hearts, leaving the results to Him. 2) Daniel's prayer reminds us that no matter how much we've sinned, there's always the possibility of mercy & forgiveness from our gracious Lord.

I don't know how God has driven this into your hearts, but we all fall short in the area of prayer. Some of you might not yet know Christ. You have no access to God whatsoever in prayer. Some of you know Him but you've been indifferent in your prayer life. You haven't been fervently consumed with His purposes & His causes. It's time for us all to reassess our lives & repent & turn wholeheartedly back to God. Does prayer make a difference with God? Yes, it makes a difference with God because it makes a difference with us. If you want your prayers to change things, let them 1<sup>st</sup> change you. We've seen that prayer is generated by the Word of God, grounded in the will of God, characterized by fervency, identified with God's people, based on confession of sin, & dependent on God's character & for His glory. Does that describe your prayers? God is calling us all to pray

more than we have in the past. These are trying times. We tend to forget the battles that are going on around us. It's easy for us to sit here & think, *Who needs my prayers?* So we never pray with fervency & never identify with the will & Word of God the way Daniel did. We don't identify with God's people & confess our sins as we should. Because of this, we miss out on the intimate communion with & blessing of our wonderful God. I don't believe we've yet seen what God can do in this church if we prayed more. How's your prayer life been this past week? How will you improve on that this week? Be praying fervently based on & in response to your reading of God's Word & according to His revealed will. Do this & God will be honored & glorified. PRAY Men come for communion

The problem of Israel's rebellion & sin that caused the exile wouldn't be dealt with simply by bringing them back to the land. That would require a much more awesome demonstration of God's greatness & grace, which would be accomplished in the coming of Jesus. Jesus is the One in whom God would deal once & for all with our sin, & thus fulfill His original purposes for His people. In Jesus, there's an unparalleled demonstration of God's greatness. With the coming of Jesus, God's glory was revealed on earth in a way never before seen. The Word became flesh. The almighty God who created the universe became incarnate in a little Baby (Jn 1:14). Yet the coming of the light of God to dwell among man didn't in itself transform us. It simply revealed the ugly truth about us (Jn 3:19). The revelation of God's holy greatness didn't deal with our sin; it simply made our sin even more visible. Yet, in Jesus, God didn't come to condemn the world (Jn 3:17). Jesus was the expression of God's grace. The God of righteousness & compassion provided the only solution to our sin problem in the person & work of Jesus, His only Son. He did so at the cross. He could have justly blotted us out of existence for our sin. In fact, the Bible could have been reduced to 3 sentences: God created a perfect world for mankind. Mankind sinned. The wages of sin is death, end of story. Similarly, Israel's own story would have ended with their rebellion & exile, never to rise again. Only God's nature as a God of grace explains His patience with His people. Only His grace accounts for His extraordinary loving condescension in becoming a Man & suffering the shame & agonies of the cross to redeem His people. Only God's grace explains Jesus' willingness

to undergo the period of excruciating separation from His Father for the 1<sup>st</sup> & only time in all of eternity, so that we, the guilty sinners who deserved to be separated forever from Him, might inherit His promises & be adopted into His family instead.

But if God were only a God of grace, a God who forgave sin simply & easily because it was part of His nature to do so, then there's also no explanation for the cross. There'd be no reason for the Son of God to be so cruelly executed, unless God is also the God of righteousness. The truth is that sin, our sin, had to be paid for. There had to be a day of reckoning for all the wrong things we've done, a day of reckoning that occurred on that 1<sup>st</sup> Good Friday. As Jesus hung there & died, He paid in full the deaths that each of us deserved to die. True payment was made for true sin, so that there could be true grace for true sinners. That's what we remember as we come to the communion table once again today. PRAY PASS

The evening of His arrest, Jesus & the disciples were eating the Passover dinner. **While they were eating, Jesus took *some* bread, & after a blessing, He broke *it* & gave *it* to the disciples, & said, "Take, eat; this is My body."** Jesus paid the price for our sin so that we might have life & be a part of His family, enabling us to come to God the Father as His children. We remember & thank Him as we eat of the bread together.

**And when He had taken a cup & given thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins."** His death for our forgiveness; our sins for His righteousness. We remember & thank Him as we drink of the cup together.