

Preaching Through The Bible

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Daniel

Daniel's Prayer (9:1-10)

Part 23

- An overview of the future
- Still seeking answers
- How long?

Daniel was a man who trusted the Scriptures

Daniel was a man who prayed

- His reality in prayer

- He gives time to God

- He comes to God in deliberate self-humbling

- He prays with fervency and energy

- He prays with a firm grasp of the character of God

Daniel has been given an overview of the future^{¶1} and has received a revelation concerning Persia and Greece especially^{¶2}. But Daniel is still praying, still seeking answers to his questions. At the end of the last vision we found him not completely understanding the revelations that had been given to him. The question he is asking is: how long will the people of Israel have to wait before salvation and restoration come to Jerusalem? Will it be necessary to wait for centuries? Did not Jeremiah speak of a seventy-year exile?

^{¶1} 7:1-28
^{¶2} 8:1-27

Daniel was a man who trusted the Scriptures. In the first year of Darius (539/8 BC) Daniel was pondering Jeremiah's prophecy^{¶1} which said the Babylonian exile would last seventy years. If the seventy years began with the time Daniel was sent into exile around 606 BC, the end of a seventy-year period was drawing near. Daniel was reading the early parts of the Bible eagerly wanting to obey it and build his life on what God taught him through the Scriptures.

^{¶1} see Jeremiah 29:9-11

Daniel was a man who prayed. We have already noted his dedication in prayer. Reading the Scriptures led Daniel to pray^{¶1}. He made the Scriptures the basis of his praying. Let us look at some of the themes of Daniel's praying.

^{¶1} 9:3

We notice his **reality** in prayer. ³*So I turned to face the Sovereign One, to God, to seek him by prayer and supplications, in fasting. I wore rough sackcloth and I sprinkled myself with ashes.* 'I turned to face the Sovereign One...' or 'I set my face towards the Sovereign One...', he says. It was not just words or routine or set prayers. He was deliberately seeking God himself. He wanted to be sure that he was talking to God in a very direct way, 'face to face'.

We notice how **he gives time to God**. Fasting is a way of giving time to God. Ordinary things such as eating food are left aside because we want to concentrate on God and our relationship to him.

He comes to God in **deliberate self-humbling**. 'Sackcloth and ashes' were a way of expressing grief and sorrow. Daniel is distressed at the sin in Israel's history, the sin that led God to banish the nation to Babylon until they learned a lesson.

⁴*I prayed to Yahweh my God and told him of our sins. I said, Ah, Sovereign One, the great and awesome God, the one who keeps the covenant and who keeps showing steadfast love towards those who love him and who keep his commands.*

Daniel prays **with fervency and energy**. He cries out emotionally: 'Ah!' This is a little Hebrew word ('annah) which expresses emotion.

Daniel prays **with a firm grasp of the character of God**. He uses different titles for God, 'the Sovereign One', 'Yahweh' – the God who redeems by the blood of a lamb. He thinks of his relationship to God when he says 'my God'. He thinks of God's greatness, and loyalty to his covenant, and his faithfulness to those who love him. He thinks of God's steadfast love.

Then Daniel frankly and fully confesses the sins of the nation

- Specific – especially the sin about not listening to God's word

- Daniel justifies God

- No excuses

- Shame

Daniel pleads for mercy

- Daniel's only hope – the mercy of God

This is the way to pray

Then Daniel frankly and fully confesses the sins of the nation.

⁵We have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled. We turned away from your commands and your decisions. He piles up different words concerning sin: sin, wrong, wickedness, rebellion. He is very specific about what the nation has done. Especially he confesses the sin of not listening to God's word. ⁶We did not listen to your servants, the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our leaders, our forefathers, and to all the people of the land. Their specific sin was neglecting God's requirements which were spoken so clearly and powerfully to them through the Mosaic law and the prophets who expounded its meaning. The whole of Israel's society became rebellious.

Daniel justifies God. It was not God's fault that the people had fallen into such serious sin. ⁷To you, O Sovereign One, belongs righteousness, but we have only faces covered with shame. Even this day we are covered with shame, we the people of Judah and the 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. Daniel is not looking for any excuse for the sins of the people. They cannot defend themselves. They can only stand before God with shame and tell the truth about themselves – or Daniel can do it for them!

The shame is caused by the sin. ⁸O Yahweh, for us there is only faces covered with shame. For we – our kings, our leaders and our forefathers – sinned against you.

Daniel pleads for mercy. He begins by pointing to the merciful character of God. ⁹Let there be mercy and abundant forgiveness with the Sovereign One, our God, because we have rebelled against him. This is Daniel's only hope. He cannot plead that the nation has done anything good or deserves any good thing from God. Far from it! He says, ¹⁰We have not obeyed the voice of Yahweh our God or followed the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. ¹¹All Israel has transgressed your law, turning away, so as not to obey your voice. Daniel can only plead for mercy as he and his nation are experiencing the chastening rebukes of God upon the way that they lived for so many centuries.

This is the way to pray. We are to pray with care and reality, giving God time, with honesty, with fervency and energy. We lay hold on the character of God. We confess our sins and plead for mercy. If we do it we shall discover a merciful God.



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