

DANIEL 9:1-19, Part 9 12-4-16
OUR SHAME, HIS FAME: The Prayer of Daniel

How many of you remember listening to Paul Harvey on the radio? I was a fan. Paul Harvey tried to make his news both interesting and positive. When he would report something disgusting and distressing he would often follow it up with a story that was uplifting and encouraging. When he did that his transition between stories would usually be, “now wash your ears out with this.” If you pay any attention at all to the news you have probably needed that most of this year. This morning I think we have just the ticket for you. We are going to get to wash our ears out by eavesdropping on the prayer of one of the greatest men of God who ever walked the earth. This is a wonderful chapter. Follow as I read. Daniel 9:**1-19** *In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans— 2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. 3 So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. 4 I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed and said, “Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, 5 we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. 6 Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers and all the people of the land. 7 “Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against You. 8 Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. 9 To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him; 10 nor have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets. 11 Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him. 12 Thus He has*

confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what was done to Jerusalem. 13 As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Your truth. 14 Therefore the Lord has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the Lord our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice. 15 “And now, O Lord our God, who have brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and have made a name for Yourself, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have been wicked. 16 O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all those around us. 17 So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary. 18 O my God, incline Your ear and hear! Open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Your name; for we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion. 19 O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”

Thus far, the reading of God’s word. I have preached often on the subject of prayer. It is a subject about which the Bible has a great deal to say, by precept and by example. We have studied the model prayer of Jesus that we call the Lord’s Prayer. We have studied the prayers of the Apostle Paul which can also serve as a great teaching tool. Today we look at one prayer of an Old Testament saint, Brother Daniel. Remember as you read that this is a man practiced at the art of prayer isn’t he? We know that he prayed three times every day. We know that he came close to dying for the sake of his praying. It was more important to him than life itself. This is a man positioned to teach us some things by his own example. Let’s look at a couple of those now.

First of all, notice the energy behind the prayer. What is it that was pushing the prophet to pray and to pray as He does? We have two answers to that and the first is right there in verse 2 *in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations*

of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. What is the activity described in this verse? It is study, and specifically the study of the Scriptures. Where the NAS has *books* the NIV has *Scriptures* and it's obvious that we are talking at least about the book of Jeremiah. It was his study of the Bible that provoked Daniel to pray. It was in his reading that he discovered just how long he could expect the people of Israel to remain in their Babylonian captivity. In 606 BC King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon began the process of taking the people of Israel back home with him into exile from their homeland. The Israelites had been bluntly and emphatically and repeatedly warned of this, most specifically by the prophet Jeremiah who said in Jeremiah 25:**11** *This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.* Jeremiah 29:**10** *For thus says the Lord, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.* The amazing fulfilled prophecy in Scripture is such a challenge to the skeptic and here we see it again. Jeremiah names the number of years - a very specific word. Daniel is reading this, and being able to do some math, he determines that the time is coming soon when the 70 years would be up. And this got him excited. Even better this got him praying. And that is not the least bit unusual that reading God's word leads a man to prayer. That is as it should be. Almost every Sunday how do we respond to the word of God? We pray. We hopefully do more than that, but that, at least, is where we begin. I hope that as you read the Bible that you find yourself drawn into prayer just like our brother Daniel. We see that Daniel was a student of the Scriptures and one who let what he read dissolve into prayer. So the first thing that energized his praying was his Bible study.

The second thing that energized Daniel's prayers was his love for God's people. This return of the Jews to Jerusalem is something Daniel had longed for all the time he was in Babylon. He wanted to see them set free and restored to the land of promise. And he wanted it bad enough to do something about it. So what did he do? Organize a protest? Did he go to Darius and say, "Let my people go?" Those things would have been fine, but Daniel's activism was expressed on his knees. He could say as Isaiah did in Isaiah 62:**1** *For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet, until her righteousness goes forth like brightness, and her salvation like a torch that is burning.* The first word in verse 3 is *so*. *So*. Because of what I read in Jeremiah **3** *So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.* You see he says. "I gave my

attention to the Lord God.” He wasn’t counting on Darius to send them back to Jerusalem, but he was counting on the Lord. “I gave my attention to the Lord.” Can you say that? Are you paying attention to God? Does he have your mind and heart and ear? Daniel says he gave Him attention to seek Him, to lay hold of His favor and His heart. And the way Daniel sought the Lord is by prayer, by supplication, two words for the same thing. And the prayer was accompanied by fasting, sackcloth and ashes. These are all ways to express humility and dependence, and great longing of soul. You see that Daniel’s prayer is not just a quick, “Help us Lord” is it? There is saying a prayer and then there is really laying hold of the Almighty in your petitions. That is what Daniel is after. He isn’t playing religious games here. He is doing business with God, the kind of serious business God invites in II Chronicles 7:14 (ESV) *If My people who are called by My name humble themselves, and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.* This is praying that involves humility and brokenness. Daniel is intent and earnest because he loves God’s people and wants to see them restored as a nation. You can see and hear and feel the man’s passion as he prays. There is a special word of pure passion found no less than twelve times in the prayer and all the more toward the end of it. It is the word “O”. Look at 15 “O Lord our God”, verse 16 “O Lord”, verse 17 “O Lord”, verse 18 “O my God”, and verse 19 “*O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name.*” It is possible to repeat things like this in prayer as a vain repetition. I’m convinced I have heard it done, but it’s not so with Daniel. Spurgeon says, “His repetitions are forced from the depths of his soul. “O Lord hear! O Lord forgive! O Lord listen and act!” These are the volcanic eruptions of a soul on fire.” Romans 8 speaks of the Spirit helping us pray with groanings too deep for words. There are times in prayer when we enter the Oh-zone. You ever been there? -- That place of earnest, deep reaching out for God. It expresses a longing that flows from pain or from love. For Daniel it comes from His love for God and God’s people, his earnest desire to see them prosper.

The second thing to see from our text is the content of the prayer. What did Daniel say to God? Many of you are familiar with the ACTS acronym, the teaching tool that reminds us to include in our prayers adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication. I like the ACTS approach to prayer and there are few places in Scripture that model it like Daniel 9. There is not

a strong thanksgiving element here. It's there but not enough to make a separate point over it, so let's just note three elements in Dan's prayer. The first is praise. Daniel begins right there 4 *I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed and said, "Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments."* The man of God praises God for his greatness and His faithfulness. And throughout the rest of His prayer He intersperses praise. 7a *"Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord* 9a *To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness."* Praise is important to include in your prayers because God deserves it and we need to offer it. Why God deserves it is obvious. Our need to offer may be less obvious, but it is found in the importance of focusing our attention on God. This is a big part of renewing your mind and there is nothing more critical to do when you go to pray than to remember to whom you are speaking. Take time to reflect upon the nature of God, adore Him for who He is. Delight in who He is. Praise is the initial element in Daniel's prayer.

Then he follows that quickly with confession of sin. He actually draws praise and confession together, doesn't he? As he contrasts God's righteousness with man's wickedness and God's glory with our shame. He says in verse 4 – *"Lord you are faithful"* and in verse 5 – *"we are rebels."* He says in 7ab *"Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord but to us open shame."* You'll notice that he says, "to us." This is not so much a personal confession of sin as a corporate one. Daniel is interceding here for his people and he is also confessing for his people. His attitude does not place himself above the rest of Israel. He sees himself as guilty with them. Daniel viewed himself as an Israelite, and thus very much, a guilty party. He includes himself when he says "we have sinned, we have not listened, open shame belongs to us." This is instructive is it not? We have to recognize an element of corporate guilt. When we are given eyes to see the wrongs of the modern American church we will see this as a 'we' problem, not a 'they' problem. Daniel was asking for mercy on the group with whom he identified and so he confessed their sin, as his sin. He says to God about the captivity in Babylon that they deserved it all. There is no blaming God here. No excuses. Indeed, he implies that God could have been much harder on them. 8-10 *'Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. 9 To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him; 10 nor have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the*

prophets.” He acknowledges that they were taught better by God. Then he acknowledges that the just consequences for disobedience were clearly set before them. 11-13a *Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the Law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him. 12 Thus He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what was done to Jerusalem. 13 As it is written in the Law of Moses. Look at 14 Therefore the Lord has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the Lord our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice.* Man, is this not real repentance? Is this not the way to confess your sin? If you are in the active parenting stage, is this the way your children do it? When you discipline your children for failing to do what you instructed, is this the response you get? Does your child say, “Yes, Mom, yes Dad, of course I deserved the punishment. In fact, you are being merciful to me. You taught me better. You warned me plainly. Shame on me.” Is that the response you get from the little persons you are raising? Is that the response you give to your heavenly Father? Or is there a lot of fighting with God, and complaining to God and whining about our discipline? Daniel just says, “Yes, Lord, you told us this would happen, you gave us the grace of warning. How foolish we have been!” He recounts the curses God gave thru Moses back in Leviticus 26 where we read this Leviticus 26:27 *But if in spite of this you will not listen to Me, but walk contrary to Me, 30-34 I will destroy your high places and cut down your incense altars and cast your dead bodies upon the dead bodies of your idols, and My soul will abhor you. 31 And I will lay your cities waste and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing aromas. 32 And I myself will devastate the land, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled at it. 33 And I will scatter you among the nations.* Daniel admits that God is perfectly righteous in his discipline, God is even compassionate to his people in exile. He confesses his sin, Israel’s sin, before the Lord. Is it time that we confess the sin of the American church? Is it time we look at what a shame we have become as a country and a church and cry out to God in repentance and in mercy? Can we say 8 *Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You?* When you go to ask God’s blessings on us don’t forget to confess sin. That is the leading element of Daniel’s prayer.

Now, if the idea of confessing sin strikes you as a doggie downer, listen up. It is anything but that. We are able to identify, to admit, to confess our sin because there is something we know. I John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* What are the verbs in that verse? Confess, forgive, cleanse. We do the first. God does the second and the third. He forgives us. He cleanses us. We aren't left to wallow in our shame. We get delivered, forgiven, freed. How wonderful is that? And how does it happen? How can a just God forgive us our sin? The answer for that is found in the deep magic of the cross, the power of the blood of Jesus shed for us. Indeed I John 1:7 says this: *The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.* What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Would you pray with me and let's get our hearts ready to remember that blood in the Lord's Supper.