

9:3-4 – Daniel Prepares to Pray

Dan.9:3-4 Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. ⁴I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession, saying, “O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments

Daniel realized God’s plan was to keep Israel in captivity for 70 years, then release them. Then Daniel did a strange thing: he prayed that God would do what God planned to do. But if God intends to do (or wants us to have) something, why should we bother to pray? Daniel is demonstrating a powerful principle of prayer that all believers should follow.

It’s only a waste of time to pray for things that God already said we *shouldn’t* have.

It is never right to pray for something that God has already said is wrong.

God knows the future – He knows the plans He has for us. Jer.29:11-13; 1 John 5:14-15

Yet God still expects us to pray over His plan, day by day. Why? What’s the point?

Answered prayer gives cause for praise. Without prayer, we wouldn’t notice the blessing.

Prayer is not about trying to persuade God to change His mind. God’s will is perfect.

Why would we want God to change the perfect plan He has in mind for us?

Prayer is not asking God to bend to our desires. We need to conform *our will* to *His*.

When God answers “Yes” to prayer, it isn’t God who changes – it’s us.

Daniel was thrilled that God intended to restore Jerusalem and free the Jews from slavery.

Daniel’s response to this insight was *intercession* in 9:3-19, praying for God’s mercy.

Daniel offered every possible element of preparation, before bringing his request to God.

Daniel turned his face toward the Lord, away from other distractions.

His concentration and focus on God as the priority indicates faith and devotion to God.

Daniel’s prayer was fervent due to his committed relationship with God.

The purpose of fasting is to rely on God for strength and avoid the diversion of meals.

Sackcloth (like burlap) reminds us of our desperate need for God. Gen.37:34; Jonah 3:6

Ashes are the traditional symbol of grief and humility. Job 2:8; Esther 4:1; Matt.11:21

Daniel left nothing undone, so that his prayer would be most pleasing to God.

God can honor even the shortest prayers, as in Nehemiah 2:4-5.

But effective prayer requires faith, proper attitude, privacy, and unhurried confession.

Adoration / giving thanks remind us *what God has done*, instead of what *we are unable to do*.

Then our request (the petition of the prayer) can be brought before God with reverence.

When we realize God’s greatness, it helps us to keep our burdens in perspective.

By having even small faith in a great God, He can accomplish wonders to His glory.

“If you can explain what’s going on in your ministry, God didn’t do it.” - Robert Cook

God’s mercy includes not only forgiveness but also loyalty in keeping His promises.

Daniel’s concern is that the children of Israel have sinned and broken the covenant.

Their behavior made them liable for whatever judgment God deemed appropriate.

But God loves His people; He gave His Word to be obeyed *so that He could bless us*.

9:5-6 – Daniel’s Prayer of Confession, Pt.1

Dan.9:5-6 we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. ⁶ We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

Daniel is 1 of 3 (Joseph, Jonathan) in the Old Testament with no mention of wrongdoing. Daniel’s enemies tried to find something - any accusation - but found nothing. Dan.6:4 Yet Daniel identifies deeply with the sin of Israel and feels a responsibility for national sin. As an Israelite, he shares in God’s promised blessings, but also in God’s warnings of judgment.

Christians are one body, branches of 1 vine; when one is hurt, all are hurt. John 15:5 We are all travelers in this life together. No one can commit a sin without affecting others. The more devout someone is, the greater their awareness of sinfulness will be. 1 Tim.1:15-16

Confession (privately admitting our guilt to God) is painful, even beyond the shame.

It requires that we come face to face with *our responsibility to change*.

Confession means: “to say the same thing”, to agree with God about our sin.

Daniel used personal pronouns “I”, “we”, “our” about 40 times during this prayer. In chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar repeatedly used these pronouns as a mark of his *pride*. For Daniel, they are a mark of his *humility*. Psalms 25:9 No excuses, no shifting blame.

John Calvin described the extent of Judah’s sin as recorded in just one verse (Dan.9:5):

“We have sinned” – falling short of the mark in thoughts and actions; serious crimes.

“done wrong” (NIV) / “iniquity” (KJV) – perverse, crooked, unjust, disobedient.

“been wicked” – premeditated evil; deliberately hurtful, disrespectful conduct.

“have rebelled” – turned their backs on the very laws God had given for their benefit.

9:6 amplifies the sin: they *disregarded the prophets* that God sent to warn them.

This disrespect was exhibited by the king and leaders down to “all the people”.

Even during times of revival under Hezekiah, many laughed and mocked. 2 Chron.30:10

The disregard of God’s Word (and His prophets) is the beginning of all moral decay.

Even worse than their sins, the Jews refused to seek God, confess and repent. They prayed for judgment against *other* sinners (Psalms 137) instead of asking God to forgive them.

Daniel knew that *confession and repentance* of sin must come before restoration.

Don’t miss the application for believers; each of us is part of Christ’s body. 1 Cor.12:27 We see sin in the church; remember *we* are part of the church. Matt.7:3-5 We see sin in our nation; *we* are citizens of America. 2 Chr.7:14; Rom.13:1-2; Titus 3:1; 1 Tim.2:1-3; Gal.6:10; John 8:7 If we fall before God in prayer and repentance for our *own* sin, we will not criticize others.

Several times in Israel’s history, the intercession of 1 person brought deliverance:

- God was ready to wipe out the Jews, but Moses prayed. Exo.32:7-14; Num.14:10-25
- Elijah’s prayer brought the desperately needed rain. 1 Kings 18
- Israel defeated the Moabites and Ammonites when Jehoshaphat prayed. 2 Chron.20
- Surrounded by Assyrians, Hezekiah prayed; God killed 185,000. Isa.37; 2 Kings 19

God doesn’t have to wait for an entire nation to repent; one prayer can save a nation. James 5:16