

Prayer (Daniel 9:1-19)
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Do you desire to see God do something big? I must admit that I get frustrated when I read about the great movements of God in the past. When I read about the First Great Awakening, the Second Great Awakening, the Businessmen Revival, the revivals of D.L. Moody, the Wheaton College Revival, and the Asbury College Revival, I get frustrated. It probably sounds strange to hear that these movements frustrate a pastor. It is not that I am against these events, but rather that I am jealous they are not happening where I am right now. I have prayed on many occasions that God would move like he did back then in these great revivals. We can't force the hand of God and I don't want you to think that I have found the formula to bring about these movements.

Today, I want to show you a gap in my prayers for revival and spiritual awakening. Maybe, you will see yourself in my confession. I want to look together at a passage of scripture that records the prayer of a prophet who is asking God to do something big for the people of Israel. I was struck by the posture and perspective of this praying prophet and how different it is from mine on many occasions.

As followers of Christ, I am convinced that you are hungry to see your friends and family members, who are not yet following Jesus, come to faith. You want to see God do something big in their lives. I also am convinced that you want to see this city turned upside down for Jesus. If that is something you want and I believe it is, I invite you to examine your prayers for such things. The prophet Daniel had a very peculiar posture when he was praying for God to move in a big way. His posture challenged me and I think it will challenge you as well. I also believe his posture may be the thing that God is looking for from his people at this very time in American history.

Big Idea: We haven't, but I will. These five words summarize Daniel's prayer. His prayer started with corporate confession, "We haven't" and then moved to personal ownership, "I will." Daniel didn't just complain about the sins of his people. He didn't say "they" or "those people" sinned. He said "we" have sinned. He included himself in the confession. He then took the initiative to plead for God's mercy. He didn't wait for someone to lead out. He knew that God was up to something big and he wanted to be a part of it. Let's examine Daniel's prayer posture together and discuss how we can model that posture ourselves.

Daniel 9:1-2, "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—² in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years."

Daniel is approximately 80 years old when he is praying this prayer. He has been living in Babylon for about 68 years. God punished the people of Israel for their sins by using the Babylonians to displace them from the promised land. Daniel was reflecting on the prophecy of

Jeremiah that stated that their exile would only last 70 years. Daniel knew that God was going to do something big for his people. He was going to bring them back to Jerusalem. It is interesting that the plan of God did not make Daniel lazy, but rather led him to take action. The scriptures don't present the plans of God as not including or negating the prayers or actions of human agents. Daniel knew that God was going to move and he wanted to be a part of it.

We don't have a promise exactly like this. We don't have a prophecy that says Jesus is going to return in 2 years. That would be great if we did, but we don't. We do have a promise that should move us to prayer. That promise comes from Jesus himself at the end of the gospel of Matthew. *Matthew 24:14*, *"⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."* Jesus promised that the gospel, the good news of his death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins, would be proclaimed in the whole world before the end of the age. Jesus guaranteed that the mission of the church, the proclamation of the gospel, would not fail to reach all the nations. That is a remarkable promise and should move us to pray and ask to be a part of that global proclamation. Knowing that the mission of the church will be accomplished, shouldn't lead us to be lazy, but should rather give us confidence and courage to share the hope of Jesus Christ. God is moving and will continue to move, prayer allows us to be a part of that movement. Daniel knew that God was about to move and he wanted to be a part of it. Jesus promised that God would continue to move until the job was done. Prayer allows us to be a part of finishing the work of global gospel proclamation. I often mirror the heart of Daniel here but fail to use the words he prayed here. His words are full of corporate confession and personal ownership. Let's look at his corporate confession first.

Daniel 9:3-10, *"³ Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. ⁴ I 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, ⁵ 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. ⁷ To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. ⁸ To us, O Lord, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. ⁹ To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him ¹⁰ and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets."*

Daniel included every group of people in Israelite society in verse 6. The leaders of Israel are not the only ones guilty of sin. "All the people of the land" have sinned. Daniel included himself in this confession as well. Even though he was faithful and not among the primary culprits who

caused the exile, he used the pronoun “we.” He didn’t say “they” sinned, but rather “we” sinned. He is not taking complete responsibility but he is taking some responsibility. He doesn’t just see the sins of those in the past, but he also sees some of those past sins in himself. He is part of the people of Israel and he feels a sense of responsibility to confess Israel’s sins.

Jesus’ promise to the followers that the proclamation of the gospel would go out to all the nations, should cause us to make some corporate confessions as the American Church. We are not completely responsible for all the sins of the American Church as individuals, but we are a part of the American Church. We can and should confess how we, the American Church, have failed the mission of God. It is appropriate for us to confess to the Lord, that we have let politics get in the way of the mission of God. We can and should confess that we have let our stylistic preferences get in the way of the mission of God. Those confessions are true of “us” and of “me.” I see those sins in the American Church and I see those sins in me. There is something really powerful in confessing the sins of your group and not just complaining about the sins of another group. What “we” confessions do you need to make? After Daniel gave a corporate confession, he described how God responded to the sins of Israel.

Daniel 9:11-12, “¹¹ All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him. ¹² He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem.”

The consequences of disobedience were made clear to the people of Israel by Moses (Lev. 26:14-45 and Deut. 28:15-68) before they ever stepped foot into the promised land. They knew what would happen if they continually sinned against God’s law. Daniel believed the exile was deserved. Daniel not only acknowledged the sins of his people but he agreed with the just nature of their punishment for such sins.

Jesus promised to punish the churches that compromised their character and therefore jeopardized the mission of God. *Revelation 2:5, “⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.”* This is what I am really afraid of. I am not that afraid that the government will shut us down or that some other group will make it unsafe for us to meet together. I am afraid of Jesus shutting us down for being unfaithful. I often wonder if the amount of church closers in America is caused more by Jesus than Satan. We must follow Daniels’ lead by confessing the corporate sins of the American Church and acknowledging the just nature of the consequences that God has either brought about or is about to bring about. Daniel shared next how his people failed to come to their senses even amid God’s judgment.

Daniel 9:13-15, “¹³ As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of the Lord our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth. ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon

us, for the Lord our God is righteous in all the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice.¹⁵ And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly.”

The word “yet” is so disappointing in this prayer. Daniel saw the judgment of God as a redemptive tool. The hope was that Israel would repent and turn from its ways. Jesus’ warning to the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2 was meant to bring about change. God does not expect perfection from his people but confession. Sadly, Israel was stubborn, unwilling to turn from its wickedness. We too can be stubborn, unwilling to push over the idols we have set up in our hearts.

Daniel knew that God was going to move in a big way very soon. Daniel also saw the lack of repentance in his people. He didn’t see them pleading for mercy and forgiveness. Daniel could have stopped here and been accurate in his appraisal of the spiritual state of his people, but he didn’t. He took the next step and interceded for his people. I hope you will take the next step and intercede for the witness of the American Church.

Daniel 9:16-19, “¹⁶ O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us.¹⁷ Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate.¹⁸ O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy.¹⁹ O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.”

Notice how Daniel grounds his request. The reason he wanted to see Israel restored was for the reputation of God’s name. The repetition of the pronoun “your” in verses 16 and 19 makes this point abundantly clear. Daniel wasn’t asking for Israel to be freed from injustice. He wasn’t portraying them as innocent victims. He was asking God for a pardon, not a verdict of innocence. It is as if Daniel was saying, “God, you have a right to punish us, but please stop.”

God was willing to do what nobody else, from his perspective, was doing. In verse 13, he said that his people were not seeking the “favor of the Lord.” In verses 16-19, he took it upon himself to entreat the favor of the Lord. I find it surprising how Daniel wasn’t attempting to clear his name or get out of work. Daniel is one of the most morally pure figures of the Old Testament. If anyone was justified in distancing himself from guilt and responsibility it was him. Daniel looked at the spiritual mess his people were in and said, “Some of that is mine too, and I will take the first step in cleaning it up.” That is the same attitude I hope you will have in praying for God to move in a big way in our community, city, state, nation, and the world.

We haven’t, but I will. I want to invite you to use this simple sentence as a structure for your prayer this week. Start with corporate confession. How have you seen the American Church

fail in the mission of God? How have you seen this sin in yourself? Confess that to God. Then ask the Lord to forgive us and have mercy on us. Make these requests for the sake of his glory in this community.

We have a really practical way for you to put this type of prayer into action. As we are working through the seven rhythms of the Christian life this year, we are taking a “lecture and lab” approach to these topics. We plan to preach on each of these topics for several weeks and then have an experience or “lab” to help you put what you have learned into practice. From Friday, February 23 to Saturday, February 24 we are hosting a 24-hour prayer experience here at the church. We hope to have people here from noon on Friday to noon on Saturday, confessing sin and praying for God to use our church to reach all the spiritual orphans in our community. Please use the church center app to sign up for an hour of prayer next weekend.

Life Level Application

- 1) **Head:** Read Nehemiah 1:4-11. What does Nehemiah say about the character of God and how does that mirror what Daniel said about God in his prayer in Daniel 9:1-19? In what ways are Daniel’s and Nehemiah’s confessions similar? What promise of God does Nehemiah refer to in his prayer and how does it connect to the prophecy Daniel cited in his prayer?

- 2) **Heart:** Read Revelation 2:19-23 and 3:15-20. Describe the sins of these churches and how Jesus warns he will respond to their sins. Do you see these types of sins in the American Church? If so, how? Do you see these sins in your own heart? If so, how?

- 3) **Hands:** Read Matthew 16:13-20. What promises did Peter receive after he confessed Jesus as the Christ? How do these promises relate to us, “the church”?

- 4) **Habits:** Read Matthew 24:14 and 28:18-20. Does the promise of 24:14 make you more active or passive in fulfilling the mission of 28:18-20? Why?