

## **“THE GREAT PRAYER OF DANIEL II.”**

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**First Christian Reformed Church**

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**Scripture Texts: Daniel 9:4-19**

### **Introduction.**

Last week we considered the *context* of this great prayer of repentance. Daniel had been reading Jeremiah and knew the time of Israel’s deliverance from Babylon was approaching. On the basis of God’s promise Daniel dared to pray a bold prayer. Tonight we consider the *content*.

After properly addressing God and acknowledging His greatness, he goes to confession. Because sin is such a huge part of all our lives we need to learn how to confess our sin and pray for repentance. This is vital to our spiritual health and growth. And this is an excellent follow up to our Lenten series and we consider specific sins and how to repent of them.

### **First, Daniel acknowledges that God owes us nothing.**

Daniel is never presumptuous, he doesn’t imply that God owes him or Israel anything. He doesn’t say, “OK, God, the seventy years are up. When are you going to let us go home?” God is holy and just and His ways are righteous. In verses 11 and 13 Daniel says the curses Moses had warned about had fallen on his people.

There is a cause and effect relationship between our circumstances and our sin. Our sin brings trouble. It doesn’t go well for those who disobey God’s laws and God’s will and God’s ways.

We all suffer the consequences of living in a sinful world, and from the consequences from our own sinful actions, choices, decisions. It is a principle of life, we reap what we sow.

God has done nothing wrong when He brings down so great a judgment on His people and His city. The fierce wrath of God was both justified and necessary, because He said He would do it if His people were faithless and unholy.

Daniel acknowledges the justice of God's judgment. He makes no excuses, He doesn't complain it was unfair. Israel deserved everything they got and more because of how they rebelled against so holy and good a God.

**Second, Daniel makes a humble, honest and clear confession of sin.**

All through the book of Daniel we have seen a picture of a godly man. He refused to compromise in what he ate, who he bowed down to in worship. He would rather be thrown to lion's than compromise or change his prayer life. He was a spiritual giant among his people, and yet he includes himself as a great sinner who has sinned great sins.

Daniel was a truly godly man, but he has lots of reasons to repent. In fact the most godly people are usually the most repentant because they see most clearly.

He doesn't *blame others*, the political leaders, the rulers, the bad people. He doesn't blame Babylon. Daniel didn't see himself as better or less blameworthy. Like Isaiah, he says "I am a man of unclean lips and unclean heart among a people of unclean lips and hearts."

He included himself as part of the problem. Like G.K. Chesterton when asked, "What's wrong with the world?" he answered "I am."

Daniel holds up the righteousness of God as the standard, and by that standard there is none who is righteous.

The prayer that is most pleasing to God is the prayer comes out of a humble heart, a heart with a deep awareness of one own sin before a holy God.

What follows is as strong and genuine and honest a confession of sin as you will find in Scripture. It is up there with David's great confessions of sin in the Psalms.

**Daniel 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.

*He calls them by every name in the book*, which by the way, is a very good practice. It shows he gets it and he means it.

These aren't the words of a casual, mild-mannered, trifling sinner, these are the words of one standing before a holy God realizing he is a criminal, a traitor, a rebellious infidel.

“They are guilty of defiance (open rebellion and insubordination), defection (they are traitors, turning against God and God’s laws) and deafness (ignoring God’s voice and His warnings)” (Davis, p. 117).

How many Christians pray this way today? How many today fear God and tremble before His holiness and wept bitter tears over their sin?

This sounds like a progression or spiral into the depths of sin. Sin led to injustice, which led to godlessness, which led to outright rebellion, making God out to be the enemy. And all of this fueled by a callous disregard for God’s Word and the ones God sent to proclaim it.

I encourage this kind of brutal honesty when we make our morning confession, to use real words, strong words. I encourage husbands and wives to use honest and strong words in their confession to each other. Parents teach your children to pray genuine specific prayers of confess by your example. Name your sins to them.

Don’t just say I made a mistake and I’m sorry, but I sinned, I acted selfishly, I was wrong, please forgive me. That’s honest, genuine, not hiding or covering up or trying to make us look good.

This is taking responsibility for our actions and attitudes and words. Let us never minimize or down play or cover up or make excuses for sin.

If you can say out loud to yourself and others that your heart is *desperately wicked*, then you are well on your way to health repentance and receiving forgiveness.

This shows that you haven’t become casual or calloused about your sin. You are still spiritually sensitive to your broken condition.

**Psalm 51:17** The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

**Matthew 5:3** Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

When you know your heart that well and you know that is true about you, there is real hope that you will see and receive the good news of the Gospel.

When I need help to make my repentance real I turn to David’s prayers of repentance in the Psalms, 6, 25, 32, 38, 51, and 130. They help me say the truth

and what I want to say. They give depth to my otherwise shallow and anemic confessions.

**Third, Daniel doesn't just pray for himself, but for his people.**

We all know that we are supposed to pray for each other, but do we pray for each other's sins? I pray regularly for my sons that God would bring them to continual conviction of sin and repentance, that they would hate their sin and turn from it.

It was a regular part of our prayers when our boys were in our home that when they sin they would be caught and caught quickly and that God would give them soft hearts to repent quickly.

This is more important than their spouse or career choices, their financial success or health.

Forgive us our sins. When I pray for my sins and my sons, I also pray for your sins.

We are all guilty. Our love for each other should motivate us to pray for each other. We should not be so caught up in our own concerns and needs, or our families, that we forget to pray for our church and our community, our denomination and our nation.

Do we have any sense of our complicity in the sins of our church or denomination or nation? We have been silent, we have gone along, we have compromised our standards and beliefs.

It is one of the marks of a true Christian that they continually grieve over their sins and the sins of those around them, and continually cry out to God, "Have mercy on me a sinner."

**Ezekiel 36:26, 31** And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. ... 31 Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations.

It is out of a new heart and a new spirit that we hate our sin and mourn over our repeated rebellion and disobedience.

One old pastor from the Netherlands put it this way:

“What distinguishes us from the world is not that we are less wicked but that by the grace of God we have learned to see our wickedness for what it is and that we confess our sins. The church is the only body on earth that confesses sin. Where the confession of sin dies out, the church is no longer the church” (Herman Veldkamp, *Dreams and Dictators*, 202).

No one else confess and repents, not companies, businesses, city councils, politicians, governments, nations, or the United Nations. Only the church if it is a true church.

**Fourth**, Daniel prays for present grace based on past grace.

You would think after praying a prayer like this, there would be no hope left for Daniel or his people. If they have sinned this much and this often and have received this punishment, what hope remains?

“To the Lord our God belongs mercy and forgiveness” (vs. 9; see 18).

Daniel was praying to the unchanging God, who is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, the God who showed covenant kindness to a thousand generations and is faithful to all His promises.

With God there is always hope even in the midst of sin. When God announces curses and judgment there is always a word of hope.

If my people should repent of their sins and turn back from their wicked ways, and call on me, then I will hear and answer and be gracious and rescue and redeem and restore.

**Deuteronomy 30:1-3** And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, 2 and return to the Lord your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, 3 ***then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you.***

This is what motivates Daniel to dare to petition God for forgiveness and restoration.

We cannot out sin God’s grace. We cannot make ourselves too bad, we are already far worse than we think. We cannot get to a place of being beyond fixing.

The answer to all our sin, is to turn to our holy and righteous God and cast ourselves on His mercy and grace, to turn from our rebellion and turn toward Him and His forgiveness.

Our only hope from the fire of hell is in the fire of His consuming love and grace. Our only hope from being exiled from God's presence is in the presence of the cross of Christ. Our only hope from death, is to die to our sins in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Notice the basis of the request. Does Daniel say the people are all good again, that they are righteous now? Daniel doesn't even appeal to his own righteousness or integrity.

He appeals to who God is and He appeals to God's own commitment to His own glory and name. When God called Israel out of Egypt and made a covenant with them, He said He will be their God and they will be His people. He irrevocably attached His name to them.

He appeals to God for the restoration of Jerusalem because it is God's own city (vs. 18-19).

He appeals to God for the rebuilding of the temple because it is God's own sanctuary (vs. 17).

He appeals to God for mercy for the people because they bear God's own name (vs. 19).

God doesn't act on our behalf because there is anything good or pleasing in us. God acts because His name is written on us, we are His children, we bear His image and name. When He acts it will be for the sake of His name and His honor and His glory.

**Romans 11:36** For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

### **Implications and Application.**

Are we truly repentant people? Are we frequently and increasingly making confession to God? Or are we making excuses and minimizing and covering up and hiding?

Daniel's prayer is a model for us. He prays Scripture, he pours out his heart to God. It is sincere and earnest. Is there hope for his people? There is in confession and repentance. Is there for America? There is in confession and repentance.

Pray for an end to abortion, pray for an end to sexual immorality, pray for an end to human trafficking, pray for an end to terrorism. For the sake of God's name and glory.

There are times when "thy kingdom come" should be prayed more than "give us today our daily bread." God's larger purposes outshine our own personal concerns.

Scripture and prayer daily orient our lives toward God. They keep us grounded in our faith that we live in an open universe, a universe where our prayers uttered here on earth escape the atmosphere and traverse trillions of light years of space and arrive immediately before the throne of God.

Scripture and prayer are our access with the living God, our communion with God, our drawing nearer to God. They open windows through which we can see God and hear God, and through which He comes to us and hears us and answers us and helps us.

### **Prayer:**

Holy Father in heaven, you are high and lifted up and enthroned in glory over all creation. You set the stars and galaxies in place. You created the earth and all its fullness. You assigned to the seas their boundaries. You raise up kings and rules and you bring them down.

You are holy and against your holiness we have sinned often and grievously. There is no goodness in us to commend us to you. You are completely justified to forever cast us into the farthest hell. We are utterly unfit to be your children and your ambassadors.

So what we ask you to do for us, to forgive us and our church and our nation, of our great and many sins, we ask you to do for the sake of your name and your glory and the testimony that all people will see what kind of God you are. Make us a demonstration of your power and your grace and your glory, for the sake of your Son and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.