

Prayer: *Lovingly Forgiven – Part 3*  
Daniel 9:12-23

*"Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer IS the greater work." Oswald Chambers*

**Introduction:** Last week we looked at the *overuse* of a certain word, *awesome*, that loses its impact when attached to everything (If everything is awesome, nothing is actually awesome). This morning I want us to consider another word in the overuse-thus-misapplied categories of words: *love*. We love everything, from food to sports to weather to you name it. Mainstream musicians have made careers writing ballads about something they haven't really figured out ("All you need is love", "I want to know what love is", "Can't help falling in love", "Love myself - Hailee Steinfeld; "Love yourself"- Justin Bieber/Sufijan Stevens; "It must have been love" - Roxette). Love turns into sentimental drivel driven only by feelings of some romantic fantasy, is used to justify almost any action (but I love \_\_\_\_\_, if you love me you'll let me, if we are "in" love we should be able to), is supposed to be set "free", and definitely we all should learn to love ourselves first. Love, at BEST, gets a squishy definition that contains components of truth (emotion, care, intimacy), but muddies up or cuts out the most important parts concerning the fact that **God defines love since GOD IS LOVE** (1 John 4:8).

If we let the word and concept of love be defined by the world around us (who are truly making it up as they go along), then when we are offered the monumental statement that **God loves us**, it too loses emphasis, or at least seems more tame than it should to our mind and heart. **1 John 3:16** says, "By this we KNOW love, that HE laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers", defining love not just as words but in action. Love is defined by **humble sacrifice**, as the foundation for a husband to love his wife is to follow the example of Christ, who **loved the church and GAVE HIMSELF up for her**. (Eph. 5:25). The Lord disciplines those that He loves (Heb. 12:6), knowing that true, selfless love looks for the best interest of another, even at personal cost to self. God is love, and His love pursued His enemies to draw them to Himself, at the cost of His own Son (Rom. 5:8). *Is there emotion and affection here?* Absolutely. Is there humility, selflessness, sacrifice, grace, longsuffering and volitional choice, sourced in God Himself and the Person and work of Jesus Christ? Absolutely. Without this second part, we have a schmaltzy sentimental, selfish, shifting idea of love, and that brings hope and joy to NO ONE. **But is this passage about love?** I thought we've been talking about confession of sin and a return to Jerusalem? What we will see is God's response is one consistent with His loving nature, not only to Daniel personally, but to Israel corporately, and to all believers generally. **What I hope everyone knows today is this:** God loves sinners and did everything to pay for, cover, and take the place of sinners so that WE could have forgiveness of sin and experience a NEW relationship with God through Jesus Christ. And when you hear, "**God loves you**", you will know what it cost, what it means, and why it is so monumental.

**Adoration in Confession (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,***

Notice that Daniel focuses on **3 aspects of God's character in adoration: sovereign power, faithfulness, and love.**

- **God is great and awesome**
- **God is Faithful**
- **God is love**

**Content of Confession (5-14)**

*"...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..." (5-7a)*

- Confession is Open Admission of sin
1. Corporate & Personal Revelation
  2. Honest Evaluation

Done Wrong - "We have consistently disobeyed and gone our own way"

Defiance - "We have rebelled"

Defection - "*turning aside from your commandments and rules*"

Deafness - "We have not listened!" was the issue

Does any of this resonate with us today? Notice that this list goes beyond just DOING sin, but shows the battleground has to do with our attitude/heart, our everyday decisions, and actively obeying. What Daniel recognized is that Israel **deserved OPEN SHAME** (v. 7, 8) because they sinned against God, and that to God belongs righteousness (v. 7). In other words, they *deserved punishment for their sin*. This is important in dealing with our sin, since we so easily try to **justify our sin** or downplay its weightiness. The basis of Daniel's prayer was simply to appeal to God's **mercy and forgiveness** (9), since they themselves had no basis of righteousness.

- Lack of Confession Born out of the Great Omission

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. (13-14)

1. Prophetic Promise (Leviticus 26:1-46; Deut. 28:15-68)

There is a measure of irony in the situation Israel found itself in. God had laid out this exact potentiality centuries before, as they entered the land the first time. Like a parent who lays out experientially to a child what will happen if they refuse to work hard, obey, or break the law, Israel followed the negative path God had warned them against. Both **Leviticus 26** and **Deut. 28** lay out the same case:

- **Obedience to God's commands brings blessing** (26:1-13) - "You shall not make idols...You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary, I am the LORD." (1-2) "I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people" (12)
- **Disobedience would bring swift, harsh, and full judgment** (26:13-39) - "But if you will not listen to me and will not do all my commandments (13)...I will visit you with panic...I will set my face against you (16, 17)...And in spite of this you will not listen to me, then I will **discipline you again seven fold for your sins** (18)...*and I will scatter you among the nations* (33), then the land shall enjoy its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate, while you are **in your enemies land**; then the land shall rest and enjoy its Sabbaths (34). Deuteronomy lays out the same case with even more specificity: "*The LORD will bring you and your king* (they didn't have a king yet) *whom you set over you to a nation that neither you nor your fathers have known. And there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone.*" (Deut. 28:36). God was not bluffing or posturing, but promising what would happen in the people if they sinned, refused to listen, and refused to confess.

- **Hope found in Confession** - *"But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also walking contrary to me...then I will remember my covenant with Jacob...Isaac...with Abraham, and will remember the land."*(Lev. 26:40, 42). In other words, God would stay committed to the everlasting covenant He made despite the abject sin of the people who did NOT uphold their side. But the pathway forward was to **confess, agree, admit, and turn to God.**

## 2. Problematic Stubbornness (Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:10)

Coming back to Daniel 9, we see that *"all this calamity"* has upon them, yet they have not entreated the Lord, had not turned from their sin, and had not understood the Truth. God was not venting His anger only so He could satisfy His wrath, He was **correcting and calling back His people**, since He disciplines those that He loves (Heb. 12:10). A good and loving parent will inflict pain in order to draw back and correct to the right path. But the people of Israel refused to see God's hand in it, and thus continued to **stubbornly stay in their sin by doing NOTHING, gambling on themselves instead of acknowledging their responsibility in sin.** There are three important ways we continue in sin by omission today:

- **We misinterpret God's kindness** - "Or do not presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, **not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?** But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed." (Rom. 2:4-5). When we don't feel the consequences of sin or are ok with the consequences, we subtly presume on the kindness of God, since He could end our life for ANY sin. His grace should drive us to our knees rather than embolden our inactivity in repentance.
- **We have become callous to sin** - *"Today, if you hear his voice, do not **harden your hearts as in the rebellion...Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as its called 'today', that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**"* (Heb. 3:8, 12-13). If we have been given new hearts (which is what God gives in salvation), we respond by the Spirit to the teaching of Scripture and are convicted of all sin. When that heart fails to respond over time or we take ourselves out of the disciplines of Bible intake, teaching, prayer, and fellowship, our hearts can become **callous, hard and unresponsive** to God, His glory, and His commands. Thus, we stop **FEELING conviction or affection for God.**
- **We misunderstand Repentance** - *"For godly grief produces **repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.**"* (2 Cor. 7:10) When put into a corner, everyone will acknowledge their sin if it helps them preserve. How many press conferences have we heard of a famous actor or athlete apologize for their 'bad judgment' as they read what a lawyer or marketing firm wrote for them. True **repentance** is produced by the Spirit who brings conviction, acknowledgement, and drives us to Christ, NOT to avoid consequences but to be made right with God Himself.

When we understand the pervasive nature of our sin, the more regular our pattern of confession will become. What a privilege to be able to confess, because we know **forgiveness is possible!**

*"What is sin? It is the glory of God not honored. The holiness of God not revered. The greatness of God not admired. The power of God not praised. The truth of God not sought. The wisdom of God not esteemed. The beauty of God not treasured. The goodness of God not savored. The faithfulness of God not trusted. The commandments of God not obeyed. The justice of God not respected. The wrath of God not feared. The grace of God not cherished. The presence of God not prized. The person of God not loved. **That is sin.**"*

John Piper

**Request for Confession (15-19)**

*"O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from you 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." (16)*

*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." (19)*

- **The singular request** - Daniel has one request in the whole prayer. Do you know what it is? **ACT. DO IT. Do what you promised.** He is the only sovereign, powerful, and holy, so He is the One who can make any request happen. What was the nature of the request? **Turn away your anger and wrath, and FORGIVE.** This is only something a magnanimous, benevolent, and purely loving God can and will do. Any other authoritarian entity will forgive, but put someone under tribute, if they do not simply exercise some sort of corporal punishment. **But our God forgives, all things, all people, regardless of background, ethnicity, or atrocity.** *But the real question that Daniel helps answer is this: how does God forgive and stay faithful and just?*
- **The Geographical Focus** - The healing of forgiveness was for Daniel and the people of Israel, but it was also focused in the restoration of the city of **Jerusalem**. Notice that God's anger and wrath on Israel's sin was focused on Jerusalem (16), and a place that once was a wonder and light to the world had now become a byword to all nations. Daniel knew that Jerusalem was where God saved Isaac in the testing of Abraham (Gen. 22), and where David set up a throne and paved the way for a Temple where God would be worshipped, proclaimed, and known throughout the world. We know that this Jerusalem is where Jesus gave Himself to be placed on a cross, where He will once again return, and set up a new Temple (Ezek. 40-48). A restored people of God in a restored city could once again declare to all the world around that God is the supreme God and call others to fall on their face to worship Him.
- **The primary foundation** - Daniel cites two principles of the same foundational reality: **because of your fame (16) and because of your name (17, 19).** First, he reminded God that He set up Jerusalem to be a light to the nations, and had now become a laughingstock, a byword to all around. Second, He would act for **His own sake, and for the city and people called by His NAME.** God is jealous for His fame, His glory, His holiness, and His name, and THAT is the best news for us. We are objects of His love and mercy, but we are NOT THE POINT of God's actions: His glory is. *"And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them." (Ezek. 36:20-23) "I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel and I will be jealous for my holy name." (Ezek. 39:25). "For my name's sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I will restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another." (Isa. 48:9-11).* God acts according to the praise of His glory, for the fame of His name, and for sake of His praise. Yes, we enjoy the benefit. Yes we are infinitely loved. Yes we are objects of grace and mercy. But God is committed to His glory above all else, so He willingly forgives to display that greatness.

This is why the person and work of Jesus is so immense. Jesus was both **just** (never sinned, perfect divinity in full humanity) and **justifier** (took the full wrath of God, satisfying His anger

and paying the punishment for sin). (Rom. 3:26) God offers forgiveness to humanity out of love, because He created us for His glory.

#### Divine Response to Confession (20-23)

*While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the LORD my God for the holy hill of my God, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, 'O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding.' At the beginning of your pleas for mercy word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved. Therefore consider the word and understand the vision."*

God answers our prayer. He is not a harsh dictator who refuses to hear from peasants. Quite the opposite, He actually encourages us with boldness, assurance, and confidence to draw near to Him since the blood of Jesus Christ opened the curtain or veil of access and He is our High Priest through whom we enter. Daniel received a **dramatic** answer in the form of an angelic messenger, and in the answer, He received news of forgiveness and love.

- **The immediate sending of an answer**

As Daniel began his prayer of mercy, God sent Gabriel, the chief messenger angel, to answer Daniel. He had seen Daniel before in a vision of Daniel 8 ("Hey Daniel, remember me?"), but this was no vision. Gabriel appeared in the form of a man, though he seems to have flown *swiftly* from his dwelling with God to speak face to face with Daniel. Gabriel is a combination of two Hebrew words, "Gaber" which means "man, the strong one" and "el", which means the 'strong God'. Note that Daniel was praying during the time of the "evening sacrifice", one that had not happened since Daniel was a kid, but one that symbolized the need for substitutionary sacrifice on the altar in Jerusalem.

- **Clarity and Understanding of God's Plan given**

In a preview of what we'll see next week, Gabriel wanted to answer his prayer, but the answer was going to much longer and fuller than he expected. God wanted to give Daniel **clarity regarding** forgiveness and the future, and He gives us the same thing through this prophecy.

- **Expression of Love received**

This is just pure grace, since Gabriel could have given the answer and flown away. But he gave Daniel a wonderful gift: the reason why he came the way he did: *Daniel was **greatly loved, highly esteemed, valued, and precious.*** I think we learn some valuable principles here:

1. **God does not withhold His love from us in ACTION or WORD** - We know that we are loved when we look at Christ, but we also know that we are loved because He tells us - Both are needed in our lives, relationships, marriages, and parenting endeavors.

2. **God loved Israel based on His free choice, and loves us the same way** - God loves Israel forever (1 Kings 10:9) with an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3). He loves those in the church age because He is great in mercy and love (Eph. 2:4) even though we were dead in our sins, and loved us by giving Himself up for us (Gal. 2:20).

But how did he actually answer? That comes in verse 24, where we see a glimpse into the future, from the coming of Jesus the first time extending to the second. What I want you to see is that the extension of love, mercy, and forgiveness came when one would "atone for iniquity", making a covering for sin. That is why we can celebrate Communion this morning, knowing we are loved, forgiven, and given mercy through the life, death, blood, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

