

**Prayer: Confessing Sinfulness – Part 2***Daniel 9:14-19**“Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon their knees”*

William Cowper

**Introduction:** The world cannot figure out the concept of forgiveness. Oprah tried this definition, *“True forgiveness is when you say, ‘thank you for that experience.’”* Gandhi - *“The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.”* Tony Robbins - *“Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself.”* Bonus\*\*\* Michael Jackson - *“It all begins with forgiveness because to heal the world, we first have to heal ourselves. And to heal the kids, we first have to heal the child within, each and every one of us”* (He was better off with starting with the man in the mirror and asking him to change his ways!)

We all want forgiveness, but when we don't understand how to get it, we can never fully embrace its reality. Forgiveness is elusive. When someone sins against us, the best we can do is try to forget, but we know that is impossible, since we cannot forget. Or we try to exact justice by requiring payment: *“I'll forgive, but you'll have to make up for it.”* We see this in popular teaching on the serious issue of favoritism and racism, and instead of driving people to the gospel for change, repentance, and restoration, the only way to deal with this sin is to **pay for it, to become an anti-racist, but one will NEVER pay enough.**<sup>1</sup>

The Bible defines forgiveness this way: *“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God is Christ forgave you.”* (Eph. 4:32). We are forgiven in Christ, and can forgive each other because Jesus paid the payment of sin on the cross. This is the foundation of forgiveness, and explains the freedom we have to **confess our sin regularly, knowing that forgiveness is had in Jesus Christ.** Confession, repentance, and asking for God's mercy becomes a regular discipline of every Christian and the drumbeat of every healthy church.

**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,*

We started last week by looking at the focus of Daniel's prayer. The Spirit of God gave us the privilege of looking into the prayer of an 80 year old saint who lived righteously, prayed fervently, and lived obediently for the whole of his life. He allowed **Scripture to fuel his prayer, seeking God as the target of his prayer, fervency to focus his prayer, and humility to fuel his prayer.** In this we gain principles for all prayer, for all time, as we seek to know, commune with, and enjoy God.

Daniel's MAIN FOCUS of this prayer was to **make confession**, which simply means to **admit and agree** with God in terms of breaking His commands. Again, he knew that Israel was going to be returning to the Jerusalem after a **70 year** exile, but the biggest hurdle was not *a physical return but a spiritual one.* If the people returned without real change and repentance, they would simply repeat the same cycle as their parents/grandparents, causing the same drift and bringing the same wrath and punishment from

---

<sup>1</sup> Voddie T. Baucham Jr. "Fault lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe" *“Anti-racism offers no salvation ---only perpetual penance in an effort to battle an incurable disease. And all of it begins with pouring new meaning into well-known words.”* I would highly recommend this book to anyone trying to understand worldly philosophies such as "Critical Social Justice", "Critical Race Theory", and "Intersectionality"

God. This **public, personal, and corporate confession of sin thus shapes the rest of this magnificent prayer.**

Before getting into the specific issues being confessed, it's important to see **how Daniel started the prayer with adoration**, a safe place to start in every prayer. This not only acknowledges who God is, but emphasizes the simple fact that WE are NOT Him. This also keeps us from rushing to Him and forgetting that we are entering into the presence of the perfect, holy, powerful God of the universe.

*“Daniel teaches us how to **adore** and to **rejoice over God**, to do so briefly but genuinely – and this is something we can do in our prayers in spite of circumstances or feelings, simply because God is who or what he is and that does not change despite the mess I may be in.”<sup>2</sup>*

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

- God is **great and awesome** – We often slap words haphazardly on things that are reserved for something greater. “This sushi from 7-eleven is *amazing*”, “The service at the DMV is *exceptional*”, or “The national media’s coverage and objectivity is *fantastic*”. We often do this with the word “**awesome**”. IF everything is awesome, then nothing is. We apply this word with too much frequency to things that do not measure up to its meaning. Awesome comes from the Hebrew root that means “to fear” and thus the word means “one who **inspires fear**”. God’s greatness or sovereignty is not a “sort of” sovereignty. He is holy other, and when we enter into His presence it should produce awe, wonder, and the type of fear that reminds us of our frailty before Him. But it also reminds us the One we are praying to CAN DO WHAT WE ASK, since He is powerful and able.
- **God is Faithful** – God keeps His promises. His covenant’s are based on His own ability to keep up His end rather than the ones who actually enjoy the results. In this case, God keeps His promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:18-21) and to all of Israel (Deut. 7:9) in regards to the land of Israel. God always upholds His end of the bargain, so we can appeal to God’s promises since He is not whimsical or changing. But remember, this cuts both ways. One of my favorite hymns, one that we had everyone sing at our wedding, is “**Great is thy Faithfulness.**” This powerful reminder comes from **Lamentations 3:22-23**, which is a reprieve of hope in the midst of sorrowful remembrance. Lamentations reads like a eulogy at a funeral, mourning the loss of a once great city and nation. In the middle was a reminder of God’s love, mercy, and faithfulness, which is positive. But it is also a reminder that God is faithful to His **negative promises, that He will uphold His holiness, punish wickedness, and pour out wrath on ungodliness.** Daniel was not buttering God up but soberly praying
- **God is love** – God keeps His covenant promises *because* He is loving. It is clear that His covenant love is designed or focused on those who “*love him and keep his commandments.*” This means that God is All-loving, but His love manifests differently for those who obey Him and those who do not. This is the same principle that John brought out in **1 John 4:-7-8, 16b**, “*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does NOT LOVE does not know God, because God is love...God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.*” God loves His own and from that love, keeps His promises to forgive, to hear, and to act.

<sup>2</sup> Dale Davis, “The Message of Daniel.” P. 116.

So Daniel started with **adoration of a God he knew and loved**, and moved to confessing of the sin that faced himself and his people.

#### 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)*

This begs the question: *what is confession of sin, and why would we do it?* For some, confession of sin brings up a reaction to Catholicism, where you had to confess to a faceless priest and were assigned some form of penance. For others, you might be thinking, *“If God knows all things anyway, why do we need to confess it?”* We know that our sin is a stumbling block to our joy, keeps us from intimacy with God, and forms a callous over our heart. We freely confess our sin because of the promise that **“If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** (1 John 1:9). Sin hardens our heart (Heb. 3:12-13), so honest confession and turning from sin, on a daily basis, keeps us from the hardening by the deceitfulness of sin. So what do we learn from the confession of Daniel?

- **Confession is Open Admission of sin**
  1. **Corporate & Personal Revelation**

Daniel, like every mature believer, knew he was a sinner. In verse 20, he was “confessing my sin”, personally and individually. Even though there is NOTHING negative recorded about Daniel’s life, he knew his heart and failure to live up to the righteousness of God’s standards. In fact, for every follower of God through Jesus, though your external sin should go down as you grow, but your **awareness** of sin may actually go up! Our hearts are deceptively wicked above all things, so confession is NOT a sign of **weakness but meekness**, one of strength and understanding our real need.

But notice the main thrust of his confession focused on **corporate confession** or corporate solidarity. Look from verses **5 through 16** and count how many times he uses the words “we, us, our, and all Israel” in acknowledging sin. He knew at the heart of the problem that faced the nation was national disobedience. Just like one person’s sin can affect the whole (see the sin of Achan in Joshua 7), the sin of the whole affects the effectiveness of the whole. This is profound for our church today. We are the MOST effective when we are the most pure, when we are *cleansed, set apart as holy, and ready for every good work.* (2 Tim. 2:20-21). As much as we might pray for our country, we must pray for repentance and confession for all in **this church** that we would not have hidden or unresolved sin holding us back or keeping us from joy.

#### 2. **Honest Evaluation**

Now look back at verses 5-6, and notice the number of ways Daniel describes Israel’s sin. Sometimes we categorize sin *only* in the BIG categories (sexual immorality, drunkenness, murder, etc), or simply the externals. But here Daniels lays out the multi-varied, many faceted, pervasive nature of sin:

**Done Wrong** – The people had “sinned”, which means they missed the mark, they had “done wrong”, with the root that means to bend or twist, and had “acted wickedly”. The sin of our heart always manifests itself in external ways eventually, and since we are born sinful, sin is always a present reality. One does not need to do a deep study into the OT or Israel’s history to discover that they engaged in all kinds of sinfulness, from pagan idolatry to child sacrifice, from replacing of true worship to the practice

of prostitution, and from worshipping God in the Temple to creating high places and altars to foreign gods.

**Defiance** – The word that sums up the attitude behind the wickedness is laid out twice (v. 5, 9), by the word, “**rebelled**”. Sin is rebellion, and we are born rebels from birth. Every time we sin today, it is an act of treason, a statement that declares that we do not believe that God is real and that His commands are not satisfying. Each time we choose to sin today, it’s a shot in the face to the God of the universe, who gave explicit guidelines for life. Rebellion is the reason why when we are told “no”, we hate it, “don’t touch that”, and we do. Praise the Lord He died for rebels like us!

**Defection** – “**turning aside from your commandments and rules**” This was not a sin of *ignorance* but of defection. God had given clarity in His Law (we’ll see this in a few minutes), but they intentionally turned away from them, believing there was more happiness and joy apart from God’s prescription for life. This type of sin is usually a **slow burn**, one that moves away by degrees or a thousand little decisions, slowly but surely drifting away from God’s commands, compromising and capitulating in ways that don’t seem like big deals in and of themselves, but collectively move our heart and lives away from God. This level of **confession is extremely important and demands high levels of honesty and self evaluation**.

**Deafness** – God used a myriad of ways to communicate to Israel, from the given Word to priests to prophets, but Israel had an amazing ability to **tune them all out** “*We have not listened!*” was the issue. They would kill the prophets who brought truth or simply ignored their counsel in favor of their own.

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 two 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 **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 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. So this morning, we all are challenged to **confess and seek forgiveness.** For some, it is part of our ongoing, daily process. For others, it could be the first time you've ever come to grips with God's glory, your sin and deserving judgment, and the offer of forgiveness.

Herman Veldkamp said this, "**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 sin. Where the confession of sin dies out, the church is no longer the church.**"<sup>13</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, The message of Daniel", p. 119