

# Daniel 9

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, there's probably a couple of thoughts running through your mind.

! What does this have to do with Advent? and what are we to make of that finishing vision?

! I've been asking myself those questions all week long. That's led me to just a simple approach on the text.

I've been telling myself, just pray. Just pray. I like to title this sermon from Daniel 9, Just Pray.

In particular, start praying the promises of God over your own life. We would corporately start praying the promises of God over our lives together.

[ 1 : 06 ] The structure of the text seems to warrant an emphasis on prayer. It's divided easily into Daniel's prayer and then Gabriel's prophecy.

Daniel's prayer seems to get the bulk of the moment.

And we should learn then how the prophecy assists or supports this notion of his prayer.

Evidently, there's prayer here by way of emphasis. Praying the promises of God over the life of God's people.

Let's listen in as Daniel prays the very promises of God. Look at the outset, chapter 9, verse 1. We now find ourselves in the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, by descent of Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans.

[ 2 : 16 ] Yes, it was in the first year of his reign. The temporal marker with which this chapter opens informs the reader that Daniel has now been at home in Babylon for 70 years.

He has served through the long-standing reign of Nebuchadnezzar and his following son in his footsteps, Belshazzar.

But now we've come to the Medo-Persian Empire some 70 years in. In other words, Daniel, who entered into Babylon as a very young boy, taken from the halls of Jerusalem's elite ruling class, that he might serve a foreign nation, has lived his entire life out.

In the shadow of Babylon serving the leadership of that kingdom. He's now an aged man. Yes, he's older than Pastor Pace even at this point in time.

By all accounts, he's at least in his 80s. And yet, we have witnessed over our time that he has learned to be at home in Babylon. He's been productively engaged.

[ 3 : 39 ] He's been serving the king well. He's been employed in ways that the Lord has blessed him. And you'll remember, at the outset, he had read from the book of Jeremiah that the good figs were on their way to Babylon.

That God was going to be with those people and that they were supposed to go to work and plant vineyards and build houses and be productively engaged.

And he's done it. He's done it now for seven decades. But when we find him in our text, it appears that he's beginning to wonder, having been at home in Babylon for so long, oh Lord, is now the time where we're to get home from Babylon?

And again, he turns to the book of Jeremiah. Evidently, he's been reading the Bible again. You can see that in the opening words there.

He refers to the word of the Lord by Jeremiah the prophet. And he began to consider that the number of years that must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem had now come to fulfillment.

[ 4 : 51 ] He'd been marking the years and then the decades and come back to the scripture. And he has seen the promises of God from Jeremiah 29, 24, other places that God said, after 70 years, you're going home.

And so he begins to pray the promises of God for the welfare of God's people. I love listening to his prayer.

It informs me on how I ought to begin praying or learning to pray the promises of God. Notice his prayer. It's divided easily into two parts.

He makes a confession and he follows it with a petition. You can see it right there at the opening of verse 4. I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession.

And the confession is rather lengthy. It isn't until verse 15 that he seems to be moving, transitioning from what he wanted to confess before the Lord to, and now, O Lord.

[ 6 : 15 ] And then finally, when you get to verse 16, O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city, your holy hill. Now, therefore, verse 17, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant.

Confession. Petition. For those of us who need to learn how to begin praying the promises of God, God, this is informative in regard to how we ought to pray.

Notice his prayer. His confession is that he, representing the people, have failed to listen to the Lord.

Now, when you and I confess things, we normally confess things we've done, things we've left undone. We think of our conscious and unconscious acts, violations of duty.

This is what I did, and it was wrong. Well, according to this chapter, the confession opens with not having listened well. You can see it there in verse 6.

[ 7 : 25 ] We have not listened. Sin comes as a consequence of not listening. It comes four times over in his prayer.

You can see the way he refers to it in verse 10. We've not obeyed the voice of the Lord. God has been speaking. His people have not been listening.

He reiterates this again in verse 11. We've refused to obey your voice. And then down in verse 14, we have not obeyed your voice.

He's acutely aware that the people of God have not been listening to the voice of God. God has been listening to the voice of God. And the consequences in their life have been horrific as a result. It's true in all things in life, isn't it? The high price people pay for being a poor listener. I have to confess, I'm not a really good listener.

[ 8 : 35 ] And it costs me time and time and time again. God's people have paid a terrible price for not listening to his voice.

Just think about it in your own lives. A child to a parent. One spouse to another. An employer to a worker.

A friend to an acquaintance. A friend to an acquaintance. But you haven't heard me. You're not listening to me. And I say, well, I heard you.

I just wasn't listening. The way it is with God. The consequences that emerge. Oh, the damage that's done to relationships by our inability to listen well.

The loss of trust that comes as a consequence of not listening well. Eventually, what happens is the one to whom we are not listening finally says, I'm done speaking to you anymore.

[ 9 : 50 ] I'm shutting my own ears. I'm turning my own eyes. And the price of not listening to the Lord is this separation, this exile, this you go your way, he goes his.

And it was prophesied to be this way. God, in a sense, for 70 years has said, I don't want to hear it. Because you don't want to listen. Think of your own life. This is where the word desolation row comes in. Desolation. Think of the desolation, how we just destroy our own lives for not having listened to the word of God.

We read it. We heard it. But we went our own way with it. And eventually we end up in a place that's just absolutely desperate.

Daniel has seen this played out within the church. And he's now witnessed God's full calamity upon his people.

[ 11 : 05 ] And he turns to God and he says, I confess. I confess on behalf of all of us that we have not listened to you. Our parents have not listened to you.

The prophets were speaking and we would not hear their voice. And as a rightful consequence, given that you were a righteous God, you have separated yourself from us or you have separated us from yourself.

And our lives are now a mess. They're on desolation row. All for not listening.

But Daniel's prayer, fortunately, doesn't end with confession. He picks up the promises of God. And it's the promises of God that made him begin to pray.

See, God not only was righteous in his judgments, God was going to be kind in his mercy. For just as he had prophesied that 70 years of exile would emerge for the church, so too, at the conclusion of 70 years, God will return.

[12:14] And interestingly, it will come through the prayers of his people. In Jeremiah 29, which I believe he was probably reading, in verse 10, for thus says the Lord, when the 70 years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place.

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to bring you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I've driven you, declares the Lord.

And I will bring you back to the place from which I have sent you into exile. This is the promise he's reading. He falls on his face, pattern of prayer.

He says, oh God, if I'm reading my Bible well, we might be at a moment some might call Advent, arrival, a new beginning, light from darkness, even preparatory to what we find in the eventual coming of Christ.

[13:53] And so he prays. He starts praying the promises of God because he's familiar with God's truthfulness to his own word.

You know, we do, we talk a lot. I'm just going to be quick on this as an aside. Well, not an aside, but as a short word. Where is God in the church today?

Why is the church so impotent? It's not that he's not speaking. That we're not listening.

And oh, if his people would start praying, he will listen and turn his ear to us again.

This petition is that very thing. You can hear it even in the way Guyton read it. The pathos in the voice of Daniel.

[15:00] Verse 15. Verse 15. And now, oh, Lord, our God. Or verse 16.

Oh, Lord. Or as he begins to close in verse 19. Oh, Lord, hear. Oh, Lord, forgive.

Oh, Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not. Oh, my God. Teaching us how to pray. You ever been in a prayer meeting where somebody has that, not just an emotional moment, but they have the angst before them that pleads to the Lord to make good on his own word.

That's the petition. The irony is that he expects God to listen to him. I find this humorous. We've not listened. We've not listened.

We're not listening. We're not listening. But then when you get to his petition, verse 17, now, therefore. Now, therefore, oh, God, listen. Listen. Yeah, we always expect more of others than we do ourselves.

[16:19] But I think his call to God to listen to him really ironically demonstrates his confidence in that God will hear him. I know who I am, Lord.

But I know who you are. I've not been listening. But out of desperation, oh, God, please listen.

And notice the grounds upon which the petition is made. Not that I finally found my way back to you. Not that I'm finally going to get after it.

Not that I'm going to turn over a new leaf. Not that my life had become a mess, and I've decided to turn over a new forest. No, the grounds for the petition are not rooted in his own obedience.

They're rooted in God's gracious providence and kindness. He says it multiple times. Take a look. Glance with your eyes as you begin to read the text again of his prayer, 17 through 19.

[17:26] Listen to it. God, for your own namesake, make your face shine upon your sanctuary incline your ear. For we do not present our pleas because of our righteousness, but your great mercy.

The pleading, the petition of God to do something in your life and in the life of the church comes from the grounding that he is righteous.

He is good. He is merciful. He listens even when we don't. He acts even though we walk away. He comes. He initiates.

He arrives to restore his people, put them on their feet, make them an army of the living God that walks according to his spirit in truth and in glory.

That's the petition. Therefore, we ought to start praying the promises of God and that's how you go about it and that's the grounds upon which we do it.

[ 18 : 38 ] We have every reason to pray because we have a God who hears. Confession is wedded to the confidence that we have a God eager to hear.

He's a father who art in heaven. Start praying the promises of God over the lives of God's people. Be active in confession.

Be confident in petition. Implore him that he would make his own name great in our lives again by the extension of his mercy and grace.

That said, I'll be quick this. Not every promise in the Bible is for us. Take this one for instance. This is for Daniel and Israel at a particular point in time.

God is not obligated to keep every promise made to people in the scriptures as it will work its way out in your life. Although Hannah prayed, having been childless and therefore was given a child who would fall into the line of bringing the world to deliver, it does not mean that he is obligated to answer our prayers in the same way.

[ 19 : 54 ] just as he did for Hannah. But, however, all that by way of God qualification. Start praying the promises of God over the lives of his people.

The miracles of Jesus, even physical miracles, indicate that he does heal. Even if he does not always promise to do so, so we should pray.

Jesus said, Ask and it will be given to you. Jesus promised that whoever comes to him can find forgiveness of sins. So start praying the promises of God for the forgiveness of sins over your own life and those that you love.

Jesus said, Come unto me and I'll give you rest. So start praying for the rest that he promises. He says, Give us this day our daily bread. So start praying for your daily need of provision.

Jesus said, Let the little children come unto me. So start praying that God will do something in the lives of your children for such is the kingdom of heaven.

[ 21 : 06 ] and I don't care how old they are. Adult children even. God, my child has walked away from you for decades.

I'm not going to stop praying. See, the danger is we stop. You've got to realize he's not obligated. Pray. He might say, Yes, yes, yes, according to the children's song.

He might say, No, no, no. He might say, Wait, wait, wait. But he's answering prayer. In fact, Jesus says, Telling a story of an elderly woman who can't get justice, he tells a story so that you don't stop praying.

He tells a story in Luke 19 or so of a woman who can't get justice from the judge, but she just keeps hammering away at this wicked judge who doesn't listen, doesn't listen, doesn't listen.

And finally, the judge relents. It's not because the judge is merciful. In fact, that's the point of the story. Jesus is like, Your father in heaven is not like that judge.

[ 22 : 13 ] Don't stop. Pray the promises of God. Start praying the promises of God over your own desolate state and that of the church.

Don't stop. Daniel was rewarded for his prayers. At this very moment, Cyrus arises. Cyrus writes an edict and the people of God are free to go back to Jerusalem.

Promises made, promises kept, prayers made, the activity of God moving forward in the life of his people.

So then, so much for the prayer. How does Daniel's or Gabriel's prophecy function then in this chapter?

Daniel's prophecy prophecy comes in 20 to 27. And I think it makes it clear to Daniel and to us the following truth. Are you ready?

[ 23 : 29 ] Here's how it functions. While we are to start praying the promises of God over our own lives, all the while, we are acknowledging that God's purposes extend beyond us and his plans will never be fully understood by us.

that's what I think is happening here with this prophetic word about 70 weeks. Daniel is now learning that God's promises actually go beyond the 70 years to something that's like called 70 sets of seven.

In other words, the prophecy is a window through which Daniel is to peer beyond the threshold of a fulfillment to the return of Jerusalem but through it to look into the distant horizon of the completeness and the fullness of God's ability to accomplish all the things that happen to Israel that humanity needs.

Namely, six things. You can see it there in verse 24. God says, look, there's more time to come, Daniel. I'm going to answer your prayer but you've got to know there are other prayers that need to be answered.

There are things decreed about your people and your city that go beyond going back. Notice them. Six things. To finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both this vision and the prophet and to anoint a most holy place. [ 25 : 04 ] What he's trying to say is the purposes of God extend beyond you. both in time and in scope.

When does this happen? Where do we find the fulfillment of transgressions being finished, of sin being put to an end, of atonement being made, of an everlasting righteousness that enters? Where the Old Testament visions and the prophetic discourse is actually now fulfilled and complete? Or where a most holy place is anointed?

When? When? When? The coming of Christ. At the cross. At his ascension.

He didn't enter into a temple made with hands. He entered into the holy of holies. He anointed by his own blood that which was merely typified on this earth.

[ 26 : 14 ] And he put an end to sin. Righteousness enters through him. Verse 24 is fulfilled in the person and work of Christ. Something that we will celebrate momentarily.

So while we are praying the promises of God over our lives all the while knowing that for Daniel those promises yet were distant to be fulfilled but for you and for me they've already taken place.

Some of them. Supremely in Christ. Let me say one more word before we go to the table.

because not only are the purposes of God beyond us his plans are never fully understood by us.

And this gets to the wrestling of the interpretation of verses 25 to 27.

What is going on here? Well let me tell you what Jerome said. He was a smart man. He gave us the Bible in Latin. Must have known a thing or two.

[ 27 : 21 ] He says because it's unsafe to pass judgment upon the opinion of great teachers of the church I shall simply repeat the view of each and leave it to the reader's judgment as to which one ought to be followed.

So here's Jerome a giant in church history. He simply restates the opinions of Africanus Eusebius Polinarius Clement Origen Tertullian eight times he just punts without ever carrying the ball himself. I feel like playing football with him but you deserve better from me. The gains we will make in the following two minutes on these verses will be small.

They will be marginal but they will be helpful. What's happening here in the text is indicated to be 70 sets of seven. Now that just falls in line with a pattern it's a way of speaking that goes all the way back to Genesis 1.

Seven days the first set of seven. The seventh day was the day of rest. It was carried on in Leviticus there would be seven sets of seven that would lead to the year of Jubilee every 49 years.

[ 28 : 41 ] Jesus seems to pick on this pick up on this very verse and push those patterns into something into his own future. Luke 21 he talks about this desolation taking place that's probably a reference to Titus in AD 70.

This pattern continues to repeat itself all the way into the book of Revelation where these final three and a half days seem to be the time period sitting between Christ's first coming and his second coming.

Time, times, half a time something we've already seen in Daniel 7 as well. That there's a definite but indefinitely known length of time between when God accomplishes our salvation and when Christ will bring it all to fruition in his return.

These terms then are elastic in sense. They deal with history but not necessarily in the way we're used to it. Three and a half days, time, times, half a time.

The book of Revelation is the same as 42 months or elsewhere, 1,260 days. They're all references that designate the time that is yet to be waited in until he finally shuts the curtain on human history.

[ 30 : 07 ] And so, the chapter sits before us with a call to start praying the promises of God over our lives. The prophecy functions in two ways.

to let Daniel know that the purposes of God extend beyond him and to let us know his will is never fully understood by us until Christ returns.

us. And so, we come to the table to grab hold here what we can say clearly from the text.

That as Daniel peered into the future to see God work salvation, you and I look back in history to the cross where your iniquity has been dealt with.

Thank you. Oh, that the church would start praying the promises of God all the while knowing that his purposes extend beyond us.

[ 31 : 22 ] And his plans at some level are never fully understood by us. But nevertheless, we come to Christ whose work is complete and who the forgiveness of your sins can today be tasted.

Our Heavenly Father, as we now come to the table to celebrate, to give thanks for that which we do know, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, raised again according to the scriptures, and in this we glory, quality.