

August 2nd, 2015 by Samir Massouh

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Date: 02 August 2015

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning to you, even on this hot day. We have heaven to look forward to. Let's take a look at Daniel chapter 9.

It's a prayer by a great prophet by the name of Daniel, and it's really fabulous. It looks fairly simple and straightforward, but it turns out to be a fabulous prayer. If you turn in your bulletins at the back page, there is a detailed outline.

I'm not going to go over the whole outline. You can do that on your own. You'll have a chance to do it this afternoon, if you so please. I just want to highlight a couple important points and just focus on the plea for mercy, his prayer for mercy.

Daniel begins by confessing sin. There is a prevalent saying at the time, the fathers ate the sour grapes, but the children's teeth are set on edge. You find it in Jeremiah, you find it in Ezekiel. It's a saying that means we are suffering the consequences of what others have done.

It's our father's fault, but we are paying for what they have done. To modernize that example, it's our parents who drink, but we have the hangover.

[1 : 38] It's our father's fault, but we are paying for it. It's our brother who exercises, and I wake up with the sore bones and sore muscles. And that saying was prevalent.

Everybody said, of course Jerusalem was punished, but it wasn't our fault. It was the fault of King Manasseh. He is the one who got us into this mess.

And so it's not really us. It's them, but we're suffering. Daniel wants them to admit that it's not like this, that everyone, everywhere, committed every kind of sin.

And the way he does it is in two ways. In 11 verses, he says nine times, we have sinned.

If you see something nine times in a row, and you still don't get it, you need somebody to pray for you.

[2 : 46] You know, don't take difficult classes in college, that's for sure. In 11 verses, he says, we have sinned, we have sinned, we have sinned.

Nine times in 11 verses. Look, you can read the 11 verses in approximately 30 seconds. In the next 30 seconds, I'm going to say nine times, my name is Samir, my name is Samir, my name is Samir, my name is Samir, my name is Samir.

I stopped with five. How should you respond? Okay, we get it. You made the point. We have sinned. You know, we get it. And then, in verse 4, 5, in verses 5 and 6, he says, we have sinned, and he uses five different verbs.

What does that tell me? He has a good education. He knows his vocabulary. He speaks Hebrew well. He uses five different verbs in the same verse as a way of saying, you name it, we've done it. We have committed every conceivable sin under the sun. We did it this way, and we did it this way, and we did it this way, and we did it this way, and we did it this way.

[4 : 16] Nobody is with an excuse. So what he wants them to admit, and to see, that they have sinned. The next section in this prayer are verses 11 through about 15.

If you look at verses 11 and 13, you will notice that certain words are repeated. the book of the law of Moses.

The law of Moses. Verse 11. Verse 13. If you look at the other three verses, he says calamity, or destruction, or desolation.

So he is repeating the word the law of Moses, and he is repeating the word desolation. What he is saying is nobody should be surprised that this happened to us.

God told us in the book of the law of Moses that if we disobey him, he will bring a calamity on us. So we disobeyed him, he brought the calamity.

[5 : 26] At least it shows that God takes his own words seriously. Maybe we don't take it seriously, but God takes it seriously, and he has punished us according to what he has said.

The law warned us, and the prophets warned us, and we ignored the law, and we ignored the prophet, and now we're saying, why did this happen to us? What do you mean, why did this happen to us?

Because we didn't pay attention to the warnings in the law of Moses. If you want to discourage yourself, if you really want to depress yourself this afternoon, read Deuteronomy chapters 27 and 28.

there is a list of curses, and if you do this, I'll curse you this way, and if you do this, I'll curse you this way. After reading about 50 of them, you'll be in the dumps, and if you're still not depressed, read Lamentations, which will definitely describe these curses.

So Daniel is saying, we have sinned, God punished us, it was fair, he warned us, we should have paid attention. God kept his word. But, to say God kept his word is good news, because he kept his word to punish us, which also means he will keep his word to forgive us, and ransom us.

[6 : 50] Daniel has just read, in the book of the prophet Jeremiah, that the desolation would last 70 years. Let me digress for a minute. How did he find that out?

Look, Daniel has more visions, and dreams, and prophecies, and ways of knowing God's will than anybody I know. You know, some prophets get one or two visions, he gets them all the time. He and Amos are in a contest, who can get more dreams, and visions. But God doesn't give him a vision, that the desolation is going to end in 70 years.

You know how he finds it out? He's reading the prophet Jeremiah. This is the guilt trip. It's coming. If Daniel thinks it's important to study God's word, and to find out from Jeremiah what's going to happen next, you can fill the rest of the sentence, can't you?

If Daniel can do it, who else should do it? Me, and you, especially since we don't get any visions, I get bad dreams depending on what I have supper the night before, but I don't get revelations from God.

[8 : 05] So, Daniel reads in the prophet that the desolation would only last 70 years, and that it was happening right before him, in that very same year that he is reading and writing this, what was happening.

So, if God is faithful to punish us, guess what God is faithful to do? To forgive us. And that is the good news.

So, he begins by asking God to forgive us, knowing that that's what God said he wanted to do. Knowing what God's will is, he prays for God to do his will.

That's variation on thy kingdom come. If I know God wants to bring his kingdom, then I pray, bring your kingdom. Which now leads us to verse 4.

Verse 4 in Daniel 9 is a brilliant, brilliant verse. So, in verse 4 he says, I pray to the Lord my God and confess.

[9 : 12] Let's notice, first of all, he uses the word Lord. There are two words in Hebrew that refer to God as deity. Elohim, God, which means God as creator, and Yahweh, Lord, which means God in a personal relationship with us.

We understand Elohim best when we look at creation. We understand Yahweh best when we look at human history and we see that God is a covenant maker and promise keeper.

God and so, Daniel addresses God as Yahweh, Lord, Yahweh. Yahweh is used over 7,400 times in the Old Testament.

It's the second most frequently used word in the Old Testament. The most frequently used word is the word the, the definite article.

But other than that, it's the word Yahweh. Isaiah uses it at least 200 times. We have been leading eight chapters into Daniel and he hasn't used it once yet.

[10 : 30] There isn't the word Lord anywhere in the first eight chapters. But once he starts to pray, he calls God Yahweh because Yahweh means a covenant relationship with God.

So he realizes that our relationship with God is not just like a boat floating on the water without a sail and without a water, that our relationship with God is governed by covenant and that the name of the Lord who instituted this covenant is Yahweh Lord.

So begin by saying O Lord. He is focusing on his personal relationship with God and the word Lord is used more in this chapter than all of the book of Daniel put together.

So he is saying understand we are in a covenant relationship but I want you to continue reading. O Lord the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of love.

Lord covenant. That shouldn't be surprised. The name of the Lord of the covenant is Yahweh. So he is focusing on the fact that it is covenant but it's not just any covenant it is covenant of love.

[11:49] It is the covenant that God uses to show us his love. In their case it's the Abrahamic covenant and the old covenant. In our case it's right in front of you.

As we were taking this we were affirming that we are in a covenant of love relationship with God. But this expression covenant of love is very very interesting and I'm going to be disappointed.

You're going to hurt my feelings if you don't get the next point. Where does this expression come from? It comes from Deuteronomy 7.9. If you have Bible please turn to Deuteronomy 7.9.

Deuteronomy is the fifth book in the Old Testament. Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy. Turn to chapter 7 verse 9 and I want you to see something really really important. I wouldn't make you go back and forth if it wasn't really important but I can't imagine you missing this point this morning. So in Deuteronomy chapter 7 look what Moses says.

[13:11] This is what the Lord is speaking. so in verse 9 7.9 Know therefore that the Lord your God is God.

He is the faithful God keeping his covenant of love to thousand generations. God keeps his covenant of love to thousands of generations.

generations. This is an unannounced quiz. Where did you see the word thousand generations recently? Last week last sermon God chose his anger to four generations but his love to thousand generations.

generations. And we saw it in Exodus and God is affirming it here. God chose his covenant of love to thousand generations.

God is infinitely more loving toward us than he is wrathful. If we push him hard enough he will be wrathful. But that's not how he prefers to operate.

[14:24] He prefers to show his love. And Daniel is thinking God chose his love to a thousand generations while he's already showed his wrath.

We've been in captivity for 70 years. So maybe it's time for him to show his love. And so he wants this God who shows his love through covenant to thousands of generations to move to save.

So let's take a look at verse 17. Daniel back to Daniel Daniel chapter 9 verse 17.

Now our God hear the prayer and petitions of your servant for your sake O Lord look with favor on this desolate sanctuary.

Give ear O God and hear open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your name.

[15:39] So what he wants to do is to appeal to God and what is he going to appeal based on? He is asking God to make his face shine on them.

he wants God to forgive them. Verse 18 is really incredible because he says give ear O God and hear open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your name.

We do not make requests of you because we are righteous but because of your great mercy. He's saying Lord please answer my prayer not because I am righteous but because you are merciful.

I want you to see something. This looks straightforward. It's not. It's very important. If you go one book before Daniel it's Ezekiel. Please turn to Ezekiel chapter 14.

Ezekiel is also praying and God is talking with Ezekiel about this. The background is this. The background comes from Abraham.

[16:56] God wanted to destroy Solomon and Gomorrah and Abraham starts to intercede. Lord if there are 40 righteous people would you not forgive the whole city?

And God says yes for the sake of 40 I will forgive. Lord if there are 30 would you not forgive? I will forgive. So he keeps interceding and lowering the number.

And then from that grew up the idea that for the sake of the righteous few God will spare the larger sinful city.

Now what Ezekiel is saying in chapter 14 is that in this case this is not going to work that even if these great prayer warriors pray they are not going to cause God to relent.

And he mentions three of them Noah Daniel and Job. I would have thought Noah Moses and Job.

[18:07] No it's Noah Daniel and Job. See that it's in Ezekiel 14 14. Who is this Daniel? There are two Daniels.

There is a figure in Ugaritic mythology and then there is the prophet. Ezekiel and Daniel are contemporaries.

Daniel went to exile nine years before Ezekiel. He is now being told that even if the cream of the crop the best Noah Daniel and Job even if these three top prayer warriors to pray they're not going to cause God to relent.

The amazing thing is that Daniel is already made the best of the best. God is putting him in the same class in the same league as these other two.

I would have thought first of all if I were Ezekiel I'd go to Daniel and I'd say for ten dollars you know give me ten dollars I'll tell you what God thinks of you or I would say you are in special favor with God and I would be tempted to say Lord you said it I didn't say it you said I'm one of the best people on your list surely I owe you know you owe me something here you know you need you know I I'm special you owe me a favor you owe me to answer a prayer but he doesn't how does he pray Lord based on your mercy we are not making requests of you because of our righteousness but because of your great mercy why does he pray and on what basis

[20 : 13] Lord for your sake for your mercy sake because you are a God who keeps his word because you are a God who keeps love for thousands of generations so when we come to pray to God we have to keep in mind he doesn't listen to us because I have been faithful all week long so now I need to collect my reward he listens to us because he is merciful he is loving he holds generations for thousand times so God is inviting us to pray and to remember his covenant of love if you think you can see God's love in the Old Testament indeed you can but you haven't even started until you get to the New Testament and really really then see this great covenant of love that we are involved in

Amen Amen