

# Daniel 9 - Corporate Confession

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Preacher: Will Spink

[ 0 : 00 ] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

We are returning to the book of Daniel this morning, Daniel chapter 9 to be exact, if you want to turn there with me. Two more messages left to close out our study of this challenging book.

We have seen the lions and fires of Babylon responded to by the prayers of Daniel and his friends as they seek to follow the true king in a land that honors other kings.

Now this morning we come to the longest of Daniel's recorded prayers. It's a prayer that shows us a lot about what I'll call corporate confession. It's a counter-cultural idea in our individualistic American society, but we're going to see the Bible challenge our every man for himself American culture.

Notice the corporate, the group aspect of Daniel's prayer as I read beginning in verse 1. This is God's holy, inerrant, infallible word.

[ 1 : 19 ] In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, by descent Amid, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans, in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely 70 years.

Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. 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 have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. 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.

To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, and all the lands to which you have driven them because of the treachery that they have committed against you.

To us, O Lord, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you.

[ 2 : 56 ] To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God by walking in his laws which he set before us by his servants, the prophets.

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.

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.

And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your 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.

[ 4 : 32 ] Now, therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy. And for your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate.

O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations in the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy.

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.

Thus far, God's holy word. Pray with me. Father, we do thank you for your word. We ask that you would teach us from it this morning.

That you would show us more of yourself. That you would show us even our sin. And that you, through the work of your spirit in our hearts, would turn us back to you.

[ 5 : 43 ] And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I think we are going sans technology at this point. So if you have your Bibles, you can look at Daniel chapter 9 there.

And I promise I will try to think as I go what things to cue you on that are not on the screen behind me. But let me start with this.

One year ago, at the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, that's the annual meeting of the denomination that Southwood is a part of, individuals, churches, and presbyteries were urged to consider present and past racial sins and the need for racial reconciliation.

As a result of that year of consideration that we have taken together and wrestling through some of those things, ten days ago in Mobile, we made the following statement, of which I will read only a part for sake of time.

The 44th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America does recognize, confess, condemn, and repent of corporate and historical sins, including those committed during the civil rights era, and continuing racial sins of ourselves and our fathers, such as the segregation of worshipers by race, the exclusion of persons from church membership on the basis of race, the exclusion of churches or elders from membership in the presbyteries on the basis of race, the teaching that the Bible sanctions racial segregation and discourages interracial marriage, the participation in and defense of white supremacist organizations, and the failure to live out the gospel imperative that love does no wrong to a neighbor.

[ 7 : 44 ] This General Assembly does recognize, confess, condemn, and repent of past failures to love brothers and sisters from minority cultures in accordance with what the gospel requires, as well as failures to lovingly confront our brothers and sisters concerning racial sins and personal bigotry and failing to learn to do good, seek justice, and correct oppression.

This General Assembly praises and recommits itself to the gospel task of racial reconciliation, diligently seeking effective courses of action to further that goal with humility, sincerity, and zeal for the glory of God and the furtherance of the gospel.

There was more to this statement than I've read there, and you'd be encouraged to know there were more than just words said a couple of weeks ago. There's a great sense, if you're there at gatherings like this, of the Spirit moving in our denomination on these racial issues.

We also approved a multi-ethnic committee to continue advising us on racial realities moving forward. We approved a fund to support minority training in our seminaries to prepare more minority gospel ministers, which are much needed.

It's all very, very exciting. You should be very encouraged at what God is doing. But I want us to notice particularly this morning, back to the first part of the statement, that we were confessing and repenting of sins both past and present, during the civil rights era and continuing sins.

[ 9 : 34 ] That we were confessing and repenting of sins both individual and corporate of ourselves and corporate ones of our fathers even.

Many of the specific examples that I read come from before the PCA was founded in 1973. Many men who voted a couple weeks ago to confess these sins have never done some of these particular things in their churches.

Does that seem odd? Is that a little bit strange to confess something that you haven't personally done? Did it seem odd to you when I read Daniel's prayer to hear this faithful prophet, himself confessing sins time and again with we?

Did you notice that word? We. You'll notice he's very clear about this corporate aspect of confessing the sins of God's people. We have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled.

Verse 5. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. Verse 11. We have sinned.

[ 10 : 54 ] We have done wickedly. Verse 15. And so it's for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers that God's people in this generation have been sent into exile.

Yes, because they are sinners, but also for what their fathers had done. Now, you may be okay with Daniel confessing sin in general. I mean, we're all sinners, right?

So we can all confess sin. But he handles specific sins the same way. The example that takes the cake for me is in verse 6. We have not listened to your servants, the prophets.

Seriously, Daniel. You are a prophet. They are the ones who have not listened to the prophets, right? But Daniel says we.

Again, we have not. I don't know about you, but I don't really like confessing someone else's sin as my own. I've got enough of my own to deal with already.

[ 11 : 57 ] Thank you. I didn't need to bring on a corporate dynamic to it. But we see from Daniel's prayer a biblical principle runs all through the scriptures that corporate confession is grounded in our connectedness as God's people.

Our connectedness as God's people. See, unlike other parts of the world that have a more corporate emphasis in their culture, in their religion, we in individualistic America don't naturally think about confessing sin in the church as a team activity, do we?

But we do know this corporate connectedness and how it works in another arena, sports. Let me explain. You see, when Alabama narrowly defeated Clemson in the national championship game this year, many of my friends were very happy.

They were rejoicing. We won. We beat y'all. We won our, like, 49th national championship or something.

They have trouble counting. Side note, it's so much easier to keep, there's less controversy if you just keep the number lower. Like, one. We won. It's easier to count that way.

[ 13 : 20 ] We did that. But regardless of how many national championships, regardless of that, there's a deep sense of corporate identity, isn't there? There is.

It's deeply felt. When we cheer for our teams, don't we? The actual connectedness may be as strong as a degree from the institution, or it may be as thin as some money given, or a red shirt worn on Saturdays.

But regardless, many of us feel we win or we lose with our team. Many of us will feel that corporate connectedness on a national level watching the Olympics in a few weeks and asking, how many medals have we won?

Or this fall, you'll watch election returns from states you didn't vote in, like Ohio and Florida, and you'll be anxious and you'll say, oh, we won or we lost because of the connection you feel to a particular party or candidate that you've connected yourself to.

Again, it's yet another area where we understand and deeply feel a corporate sense of connectedness. And I have you ask yourself this morning, why do I feel more deeply connected with sports and politics than I do with the church?

[ 14 : 48 ] How much more should we appreciate the connection that we have in Christ that we actually have because of Him? If you remember Ephesians when we talked last year about being connected in Christ, that the reality of our connectedness with each other because of our identity in Christ far outweighs all the other differences that would set us apart, right?

It's not artificial or theoretical. It's far beyond the bond of team or party loyalty. It's an actual connection in one body, one family by our union with Christ.

And it matters more than all of our differences. Daniel models that reality for God's people as he says, we, we, we, we, our sins.

Whether God's people is a particular congregation, a national denomination, or the universal church, we are called to rejoice together and weep together.

When one part of the body is honored, all are honored. When one suffers, all suffer. 1 Corinthians 12. It's why we value being together like next Sunday night when we're gathering for ice cream and just to celebrate nothing more but nothing less than each other.

[ 16 : 22 ] The connectedness, the fellowship that we have in Christ. It's why we see Christians beheaded across the globe and we mourn and say we were attacked.

It's why we confess particular racial sins committed by our brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, some of them before we were born or in other congregations because we have sinned.

This is a biblical pattern all the way back to Adam, isn't it? Adam's first sin affects the entire human race all connected to him by birth.

Romans 5 tells us that in Adam, death came to all men because all sinned. Many died through one man's trespass.

So while I will admit there is a difference in individual sins that we confess particularly and corporate sins, we confess the sins of our fathers and should expect that because they're our fathers, just like with Adam, in many ways, those sins still impact us and those same heart attitudes are found in us.

[ 17 : 46 ] The Presbyterians in the 1860s and the 1960s may have done things that we personally haven't done. But their prejudices against those different from them and pride in their own social standing are idols and sins we know quite well and must confess alongside their particular sins.

So we need to be challenged here. It's a cultural blind spot for American Christians. We often feel more connected to a football team than a family of God.

More connected to a political party than to the people of God. And part of following the true king, if that's what God is calling us to do, and he is, part of that is realizing that following that king connects you inextricably and beyond anything else that you're connected to, to the joys and sorrows, the victories and defeats of many others following the true king with you.

Not only is corporate confession grounded in our connectedness as God's people, but Daniel also shows us in his prayer it is based on sins of omission as well as sins of commission.

The things we neglect, not just the actions that we take. Certainly we see Daniel confessing that God's people have acted wickedly, rebelled against God and transgressed God's law.

[ 19 : 27 ] They've committed particular sins, violating God's commands where he specifically told them to do something different. But it's also vital for us to consider the duties that we have neglected doing.

The ways we have not shared God's heart and priorities. Notice this twice in his prayer. What they have not done. First verse six, where we have not listened to your servants, the prophets, who spoke to all the people of the land.

We have not listened. And then later verse 13, yet we have not entreated the favor of the Lord our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth.

Even when called to it repeatedly, we have not done these things. See, when the people of God lose their zeal for the heart of God, when they fail to heed his word and have it shape their lives, when they neglect to form their lives around his truth and his priorities, that is just as grievous to God as specific violations of his commandments.

That's what these verses are telling us. And Daniel confesses that from the people of Israel, that over and over again, they have omitted things they should have done.

[ 20 : 54 ] They've neglected God's heart for the poor, the oppressed, and the alien. They have failed to truly be a kingdom of priests, spreading his light to the nations.

I want to help us think corporately about broad sin patterns in our lives this morning that are or have been both sins we have committed and opportunities to share God's heart that we have neglected.

Some of these, as we talk about them, you may feel uniquely in a personal way. I certainly do. It's a hard but needful thing when God's word and spirit convict us of our sin, isn't it?

But when you don't feel that same conviction personally, I'd urge you to remember that the idea here is corporate confession. To let these corporate realities break your heart before your Father.

I'm just going to mention three areas for us to consider. The first to follow the lead of our denomination is racism and racial brokenness. Some have observed that in our society, Sunday is the most segregated day of the week.

[ 22 : 12 ] And that sad reality is partly due to the attitudes in our hearts that emphasize and focus on our racial and cultural differences rather than allowing the gospel to break down those barriers in beautiful ways like God has promised it will.

We harbor underlying prejudices. relationships with people like us and so subtly elbow out those who look different.

We're content with the comfortable status quo and don't make room at the table for others who are different because we are so full of those just like us.

If you look back at the denominational statement, the whole second paragraph is about our sins of omission in this regard. All we've neglected while sitting around denying that we're racist, we've said these things in this statement.

It's our failures to love brothers and sisters from minority cultures as the gospel requires. Failures to confront brothers and sisters who are in racial sin and have personal bigotry and we've let it go without challenging them.

[ 23 : 31 ] Failing to learn to do good, seek justice and correct oppression. Maybe not actively going to do something but not taking up the cause as God would call us to in His Word.

Do we long as we should for every tribe and tongue and people and nation vision of the kingdom in Revelation? Do we long for that kingdom to come today?

Our relationships today tell me we don't. We're in the state of Alabama, y'all, where we're reminded regularly just by names of cities and events on the news of the pain and oppression of our African-American brothers and sisters and fellow image bearers that they've undergone for centuries all around us right here in our towns and cities and we have not sought aggressively to correct oppression and listen to their pain and their experience to enter in to listen and mourn and grieve with them.

We know there are systems that benefit us and exclude them and others but we don't sacrificially seek to remedy that. An Asian-American PCA pastor named Duke Kwan spoke to a couple hundred of us gathered to talk about these issues one evening during General Assembly a couple weeks ago and among other great challenges he said I call you tonight dear friends not simply to repent corporately for past overt acts of racism which we must do and Lord willing which we will do I call you to commit to the dismantling of white cultural normativity in the PCA and I call you to the establishment of a new norm a new vision for our denomination that might be called multicultural normativity he's saying a vision that you would commit to that your kitchen table and your church would look more like heaven like the throne room in Revelation than it does today amen to that that's what he means that we would long for that that we would want our church to look like that and so that it would start in our hearts and in our homes we've worshipped a God made in our own image and neglected others created different in his image secondly we have worshipped the idol of materialism and neglected the poor and the oppressed money is not evil but our hearts are we're proud of what we have earned for ourselves aren't we and honestly in our hearts we feel it proves we're better smarter harder working more deserving than those who have less we shape our lives around consumerism demanding more features better service and increased choices we debate which restaurant to eat at or which outfit would look better while others are neither fed nor clothed and we know we have been worshipping self instead of God because we neglect to have his heart for the poor

God wrote laws to care for the oppressed and the marginalized Jesus loved the poor and the downtrodden but we have been quicker to lecture and criticize than we have been to sacrifice and love we have been fearful and self-protective rather than humble and self-sacrificing when we consider a day where no one is truly impoverished in the entire city of Huntsville no one homeless no one hungry can you imagine that?

[ 27 : 48 ] our first thought is how nice that would be for us not what a joy it would be for them finally this morning because my heart could only take so much conviction in one week we worship the comfort of a busy silence and neglect the lost all around us our lives y'all are packed full of things that we do for ourselves for our kids for our futures we're just packed to the gills there's not room for anything else meanwhile the only hope for a world desperately in need of hope is kept consistently to ourselves eternity hangs in the balance and we are too comfortable in what I'll call our busy silence to be inconvenienced by the risk of rejection embarrassment or failure you see it's often not that we plan to avoid the lost but that we plan so many other things first that we can't help but miss the lost and we're not bothered when it happens

God so loved the world that he sent his son from heaven to earth to rescue lost souls but we have neglected that passion of God's heart we can't be bothered to walk next door to alter vacation plans to share that same good news we've worshipped ourselves and lost sight of the heart of God we have loved and prioritized ourselves and we have neglected the ethnically materially or spiritually different sounds actually if you read the Old Testament like the people of Israel especially in Daniel's day just read through any of the prophets prophets I'm going to let us confess these things together in just a minute but first one more question from this passage is there any hope it's just sin sin sin failure failure failure is there any hope when we consider these realities in our hearts and in our churches the last thing about corporate confession this morning from Daniel is that it is fueled by hope in God's promises to his people that's what drives corporate confession and makes it a reality just as we know personally that it is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance so corporately we cling to his promises and his faithful character as we confess our failings

Daniel in this passage is driven we're told by reading God's word through the prophet Jeremiah to pray and confess sin he reads God's covenant promises to restore his exiled people after they've been gone from the promised land and he opens his prayer by claiming these covenant promises verse 4 I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession oh Lord the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments we are your people he says the ones you set your love upon your faithful covenant love the ones you rescued out of Egypt verse 15 the ones you promised to redeem with your faithful covenant love the love that promises you will be reliable even when we aren't even when we fail it's your promise to come through for us one commentator

Dale Ralph Davis says the Lord's promises drive his servants prayer here's this picture it's as if God's promises have velcro on them and our prayers are meant to get stuck there I love that picture our prayers stuck on the promises of God and then Daniel appeals to God's character as a merciful God who delights to forgive verse 8 look it's the open shame that is ours because we've sinned against God but to the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness that's the kind of God he is look down to verse 18 we don't present our pleas before you because of our righteousness but because of your great mercy do you see what Daniel's down to as he goes through and confesses the sin of his people his only hope is God's great mercy he's broken hearted over the sin of his people and he pleads for mercy from a faithful merciful father who loves to forgive it's that mercy from God toward his covenant people that is our hope as we confess our sin in fact it's what drives us to confess one of the primary things

I believe has sparked this renewal and repentance in the PCA is the way our African American brothers and sisters have patiently modeled the merciful and forgiving heart of God to us they have been unrelenting in their work for justice and equally unrelenting in their gracious commitment to forgiveness that's prompted us to feel safe to confess it's that mercy of God his kindness that leads us to repentance you see God didn't just use the principle of corporate connectedness one time he didn't just have someone stand in our place once he didn't just have Adam's sin counted to our account as sin and death now in Christ he has credited righteousness and life to our account

[ 34:19 ] Romans 5 is all about this read the whole thing later verse 15 says if many died through one man's trespass that's Adam much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many and the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin for the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification for if because of one man's trespass death reigned through that one man much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ therefore as one trespass led to condemnation for all men so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men for as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous glory hallelujah by one man's obedience the many will be made righteous the many sinners the many who had fallen apart who'd sinned themselves and their fathers and they'd failed to do what God had called them to do

Jesus in one man brings them life and righteousness that they didn't deserve that is great mercy mercy that frees us to confess our deep sin that's why confession is a unique mark of the church because we have a God who forgives because we have a righteousness that's not our own it's not based on our record it's mercy that gives us hope because we may well initially feel that this whole corporate connection thing is unfair we'd rather just be judged like we always are on our own merits that's what we're used to in our culture right but in fact it's our corporate connectedness that is our only hope on our own merits we are hopeless unrighteous and facing death but being connected to Jesus changes everything by the one man's obedience many will be made righteous will receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness let's pray and then we'll confess together father we praise you for the grace that is ours in Christ

Jesus we thank you for his sacrifice on our behalf taking the punishment that our sin deserved once and for all the righteous for the unrighteous father would it lead us even this morning into repentance that we might hate our sin and love our savior holy spirit even now work in our hearts to show us our sin and our savior as we take a few moments silently amen we skipped our typical confession of sin earlier in the service so we could do it after wrestling with our need for confession from this passage

I've written an extended corporate confession for us this morning taken from some of the issues we've talked about and some of Daniel's words in Daniel 9 let's stand together and confess our sin heavenly father we confess that we have sinned and turned aside from your commands and your heart we have thought more highly of ourselves than of others different from us we have harbored prejudice in our hearts we have spoken carelessly we have laughed hurtfully and God we have failed to love our neighbor by defending our minority brothers and sisters we have neglected to address broken systems we have been satisfied with relationships with others like us we have not longed for a multicolored kingdom that you have promised us your kingdom is oh

Lord have mercy on us heavenly father to us belongs open shame because of our unbridled materialism we have sought security and created things rather than the creator we have been proud in our own accomplishments rather than grateful for your gifts and God we have neglected the poor and the oppressed in our fear and selfishness we have not cried over their suffering or shown your benevolent heart at all times oh Lord have mercy on us heavenly father we have rebelled and failed to obey your voice you have called us to share the good news of Jesus with all people to make disciples of all nations but we have busied ourselves with the temporal pleasures we desire and avoided the eternal souls of people created in your image and God we have refused to risk discomfort rejection or even persecution for the sake of your name oh



[ 40 : 54 ] Lord have mercy on us forgive us Lord for these and many other violations of your holy law we have done as well as many other duties we have left undone oh Lord hear oh Lord forgive oh Lord pay attention and act delay not for your own sake oh God for we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness but because of your great mercy amen let's continue in confession now as we sing the words of David's psalm of confession psalm 51 for more information visit us online at southwood.org Thank you.