

Keynotes from Sam Gordon's am Sermon on 3/4/2022

Text: Daniel 9 verses 1-23

“Doing Prayer the Daniel Way”

Scripture references from ESV unless otherwise attributed.

Daniel 9:1-23 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—² 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, seventy years.³ Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.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,⁵ 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, 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, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you.⁸ To us, O LORD, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you.⁹ To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him¹⁰ 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.¹¹ All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him.¹² He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem.¹³ As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favour 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.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ “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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and 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. ¹⁹ 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.”²⁰ 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, ²¹ 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. ²² He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, “O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding. ²³ At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a 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.

This chapter of Daniel teaches us many important lessons on prayer. Daniel was a man of prayer, praying three times daily (**6:10** see p4). The big prayer in **Ch 9** is passionate and heartfelt, touching the throne. It is rooted in scripture and is on a par with the persistent prayers of Jacob and Jabez (**Gen 32:26, 1 Chron 4:10** see p4), reminding us that there are no shortcuts to cultivating a bountiful relationship with God. This is such a challenge to us.

What an individual is in secret, on his knees before God, that he is and no more (John Owen)

1. **The prompting of the prayer (9:1-2 above).** Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, is in the first year of his reign. Babylon has fallen, and a new empire (Medo-Persia) has taken its place. For that generation of people, it must have been a worrying time, not knowing what their lives would look like in this brave new world. As usual, Daniel is down on his knees with a scroll of scripture open in front of him, but particularly in this hour of crisis he desperately longs to hear a word from God.
 - Daniel knew the value of taking time out with God. Do we know this?

Daniel considered the writings of Jeremiah to be the living word of the living God. As he read **Jeremiah 25:11-12** (see p4), he was stopped in his tracks, and probably reread it

to make sure he was reading it right. The God who spoke to Jeremiah had now spoken to Daniel. Like Daniel (in his 80s at that point), we are never too old to read the word of God, and to be amazed at what we read. Daniel had been reminded that the God who opened up the Red Sea would open up a way for his covenant people to return to their homeland. He realised that the 70 years of exile were nearly over and that the Jewish captives were on the threshold of a new era.

What scripture says is what God says, and what God says happens

- 2. The penitence in the prayer (v3 above).** The message from the scroll spurred Daniel on to prayer, with total confidence in the sure promises of God. When we understand the truth of the word of God, we can make sense of the purposes and plans of God and these will govern and guide our prayers. Having heard God speak, Daniel was driven to action and so on to his knees. We need to hear from God before we pray, just as Daniel did.

His prayer is bathed in allusions to the Old Testament. (**Lev 26:40, Deut 28:64, Ps 44:14, Jer 25:11** see p4). Daniel had been digging down deep into the word of God, and now lifted his face heavenward. He sought the Lord by prayer and pleas for mercy. He poured out his heart in supplication, earnestly setting his face to gaze upon his God. He was doing prayer the Daniel way. He waited upon God with fasting, sackcloth and ashes, assuming the garb and guise of a remorseful soul and seeing himself as a beggar hammering at the back door of God's mercy and grace.

He was prompted to pray by what he read in the word which was so relevant to the time in which he was living.

- 3. The particulars in the prayer (vv 4-14 above).** Before even a word of confession was spoken, Daniel worshiped his God, just as Jesus tells us to in the Lord's prayer (**Matthew 6:9-13** see p4).

Before you tell God how big your problem is, tell God how big he is!

- He is a promise-keeping God who can be trusted at all times
- He warmly responds to those who obey his precepts and is firm and fair when dispensing justice to those who flout his commands

- His steadfast love is legendary, reminding us that God never fails. We let him down so often, but he loves us still

As Daniel began to confess the sins of the people, he identified himself with them in every way. He stood alongside them in their hour of need and was devastated over a problem he did not create. He describes their sin (v5), showing how far they have wandered away from the Lord. There is sin upon sin upon sin upon sin upon sin:

- We have sinned** – they have fallen short of God’s standard
- We have done wrong** – they have been perverse and crooked in their dealings
- We have acted wickedly** – they are lawless and ungodly, behaving with gross impiety
- We have rebelled** – they have rebelled against the Lord who redeemed them, wanting to go their own way
- We have turned aside** – implying that they have spurned God’s love and rejected the divine law

God reached down and they did not want to know. God has said so much and they have listened so little. How relevant this is to our own times. We have become desensitised to sin, and tend to sanitise it. We need to ask God to:

Deepen the sorrow within us for our sins.

What a contrast with the character of God which Daniel outlines in vv7-11.

- The purity of God** – he is righteous and true to himself at all times
- The purpose of God** – it is God who has scattered them
- The pity of God** – he exercises an abundance of rich, tender mercy in all his dealings with them
- The pardon of God** – he is willing to forgive them even though they have ridden roughshod over his word
- The promise of God** – God fulfilled his side of the agreement when he withheld his blessing, just as he said.

This is the law of cause and effect (vv12-14). God did what he did because they did what they did, so they have no one else to blame for the mess they are in, but they seem indifferent and complacent about their sin.

This is a challenge for all of us to take on board. How do we see sin? We need to cry to God for mercy and admit our sin and guilt before him.

When we mourn over our sins, our gracious God abundantly pardons.

4. The petition in the prayer (vv15-19) After this full confession, Daniel earnestly pleaded for God to step into the dreadful situation they found themselves in so that his name might be magnified and glorified. This was all that mattered to Daniel.

It is the glory and splendour of God that is at stake.

In these verses, Daniel lists some of the consequences of their heinous sin, but also speaks of the time when God redeemed and delivered his people from bondage in Egypt. They did not deserve it then, and they do not deserve it now, but God redeemed them before and it is time for him to do it again. Then, he brought them out; now, he will bring them back. Daniel's prayer is God-centred. It is full of references to the matchless character of God, speaking of his righteousness, his anger, his wrath and his mercy.

- Daniel knows the great God of heaven is not deaf, yet he longs for him to open his ears to his pleadings for help.
- Daniel knows that the Most High is not blind, yet he yearns for him to open his eyes to see what is going on.

He was ever mindful that every blessing he enjoyed came from the hand of a generous God. He knows that he has nothing to offer because he recognises that he is the recipient of God's undeserved favour. This is true for us too. Daniel rounds his prayer off by throwing himself on the mercies of the God of heaven (v19)

He has prayed with every fibre of his being. Prayer is hard work.

5. The power in the prayer (vv20-23). Daniel's prayer was unfinished because God interrupted him! God heard his prayer, as he always does, and sent Gabriel from heaven to assure him that his prayers will be answered. There is no need for him to fear or fret, because even as he began to pray, the answer was already on its way. (Isaiah 65:24 see p4). The same is true for us today.

Gabriel refers to Daniel as one who is **greatly loved** (or **highly esteemed** NIV). Daniel has caught the eye and ear of God because he lived his life all out for God, even though by then he was a pensioner. He was someone who was precious to God, greatly valued and treasured by him. Those words of gracious encouragement must have thrilled his soul. Should we not be desiring the same accolades from God? Peter writes in a similar vein when he addresses us, the people of God as **'a chosen people, a kingdom of priests, God's holy nation'** (NLT).

James tells us that **'the earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results'** (James 5:16 NLT).

The tremendous news in all this is that the prayer of a righteous person at Broadstone Baptist Church, or anywhere else, can change a life, a marriage, a church, a school, a community and an entire nation.

- Abraham discovered that only ten men of Daniel's calibre were needed to save Sodom (**Gen 18:16-33** see p4).
- Are there ten people among us at BBC who will rise to the challenge to do prayer the Daniel way?

We admire Elijah, and with good reason, but we emulate Daniel when **we take on board his mindset, get down on our knees and watch how God changes our world.**

That is doing prayer the Daniel way

Daniel 6:10 He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.

Genesis 32:26 Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

1 Chronicles 4:10 Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from harm^[c] so that it might not bring me pain!" And God granted what he asked.

Jeremiah 25:11-12 This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. ¹² Then after seventy years are completed,

I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the LORD, making the land an everlasting waste.

Leviticus 26:40 But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me,

Deuteronomy 28:64 Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods – gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your ancestors have known

Psalms 44:14 You have made us a byword among the nations; the peoples shake their heads at us

Jeremiah 25:11 This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years

Matthew 6:9-13 Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us this day our daily bread, ¹²and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Isaiah 65:24 Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear

Gen 18:16-33 Then the men set out from there, and they looked down toward Sodom. And Abraham went with them to set them on their way. ¹⁷The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, ¹⁸seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? ¹⁹For I have chosen ^[f]him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him." ²⁰Then the LORD said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, ²¹I will go down to see whether they have done altogether ^[g]according to the outcry that has come to me. And if not, I will know." So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD. ²³Then Abraham drew near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? ²⁵Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" ²⁶And the LORD said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake."²⁷ Abraham answered and said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. ²⁸Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." ²⁹Again he spoke to him and said, "Suppose forty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of

forty I will not do it.”³⁰ Then he said, “Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there.” He answered, “I will not do it, if I find thirty there.”³¹ He said, “Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there.” He answered, “For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it.”³² Then he said, “Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there.” He answered, “For the sake of ten I will not destroy it.”³³ And the LORD went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.