

Confession

DANIEL'S PRAYER OF CONFESSION ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE

Focal Verses • DANIEL 9:1-7, 17-19

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: EXPLORE principles of prayer as reflected in Daniel's prayer; REFLECT on times when our prayers have been answered; and IDENTIFY times when prayer should be our priority over action.

In Focus

Craig and Miriam had watched their friends, Tim and Karen, face what seemed like one crisis after another. Before Tim and Karen came to the Lord five years earlier, their lives had not been shining examples for their children, but since then, they have turned their lives around. However, their son T. J. had gotten involved with the wrong crowd, was arrested for his involvement in a crime, and given a year's probation. At that time, their home had just burned down, Tim's mother was gravely ill, and Karen lost her job—a job they needed to make ends meet.

Craig and Miriam saw these situations taking a toll on their friends. They realized that just telling Tim and Karen to pray was not enough. They believed they should do something. Craig and Miriam invited Tim and Karen for dinner. Miriam took the opportunity to slip a little money into Karen's hand. Although Karen tried to protest, she was appreciative. Craig gathered information about resources for Tim's mom. Still, the couple felt they could do more.

On Monday morning, Craig told Miriam, "I've asked the Lord about Tim and Karen's situation, and He told me to 'push back the plate.' I'm going to start a fast, confess on their behalf, and ask God to help them." Miriam answered, "Count me in, too."

The two fasted and prayed for their friends for three days. Within a month, God turned it around. T. J. had talked to the pastor about being baptized. One of the other boys arrested with T.J. confessed to the crime, so his conviction was overturned. Tim's mother had a great caregiver, and Karen found a new job. Craig and Miriam never told their friends they had fasted on their behalf. They just thanked God for answered prayers.

Sometimes, like Daniel, we need to confess and intercede in prayer for others. Who is on your prayer list?



Keep in Mind

"Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake"
(Daniel 9:17, KJV).

Focal Verses

KJV Daniel 9:1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans;

2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:

4 And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;

5 We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments:

6 Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name

to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

7 O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.

9:17 Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.

18 O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.

19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

The People, Places, and Times

Sackcloth and Ashes. In biblical times, the tradition for prayer and supplication before God was to don sackcloth and ashes. Sackcloth was worn for mourning; ashes were a symbol of shame. To wear sackcloth and ashes was to admit a need for God's intervention on a dire matter (see Daniel 9:3).

Background

The time frame for today's lesson is identified by events rather than dates, Daniel mentions the reign of several kings. It was in 605 B.C. that God used King Nebuchadnezzar to take Daniel, the three Hebrew assistants, and thousands of other Hebrews into captivity.

God also allowed the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Darius, the king mentioned in today's lesson, came to leadership after Babylon fell to Persia.

Jeremiah was prophesying of the exile when Daniel was taken in the first deportation (605 B.C.). The second deportation (597 B.C.), resulted in the deportation of the prophet Ezekiel and the final deportation of the Israelites in Judah resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (586 B.C.). It is the writings of Jeremiah that Daniel mentions in today's text. In this lesson, Daniel mourns the plight of his people and nation, and he goes to God as a prophet and intercessor on their behalf.

At-A-Glance

1. Daniel Prepares to Pray (Daniel 9:1–3)
2. Daniel Confesses on Behalf of the People (vv. 4–7)
3. Daniel Makes His Request Known (vv. 17–19)

In Depth

1. Daniel Prepares to Pray (Daniel 9:1–3)

Judah sinned against God, and that sin would be punished. Prior to captivity, God in His mercy sent prophets with warnings that Israel and Judah should repent of their wicked ways and return to God. One such prophet was Jeremiah, who prophesied to the southern kingdom, Judah. He foretold the exile of Judah and prophesied that the nation would be captive in Babylon for 70 years. The people continued to be disobedient and, as God warned, Judah was defeated.

God punished the nation for their sin by sending Judah to a strange land. This also was meant to encourage them to turn to God. The punishment was severe, but God was merciful. Judah's exile in Babylon was not to be permanent. God would end the exile, reunite the nation, and restore the temple. Still, they were a nation in crisis. They needed to learn to pray and to recommit their dependence on God.

Daniel prayed to God. God's plan had been put in motion. God had allowed Judah to be exiled in Babylon and Babylon to be overthrown by Persia. The time prophesied by Jeremiah for the return from captivity was drawing near, and Daniel realized that he needed to pray and fast to know the Lord's will for His people. He put himself into sackcloth and ashes because he wanted to be humbled before God as he asked God's mercy upon the people of Judah and the city of Jerusalem.

2. Daniel Confesses on Behalf of the People (vv. 4–7)

Daniel's first act was to acknowledge God's sovereignty. We cannot come to God properly unless we realize that He is righteous and right! In verse 4, Daniel confessed who God is. He called God *Jehovah* (Lord) and therefore recognized God as the eternal and self-existent One. He acknowledged that God did not need them; they needed God. He called God "my God" or "my *Elohiym*," the righteous Judge of all, the divine Ruler of all people. He called God *Adonai* saying, "O Lord." Using this national name of Lord, Daniel confessed that he knew God. In doing so, he admitted that he was unworthy to come before Him.

Daniel recognized God as "the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments" (v. 4). Again without even yet identifying Israel's specific sins, Daniel humbly confessed that God is mighty and to be feared because of His power. God is faithful and keeps His covenant with those who keep covenant with Him. God is merciful and lovingly bestows His mercy on those who love Him by following His commandments. Already Daniel saw and confessed that he and the nation were unworthy to even approach God.

Then Daniel confessed the sins of the people before this righteous God. In verse 5 he says, "We have sinned." Daniel was not flippant and knew that just lumping together everything under the banner of "sin" was not actually and sincerely confessing the wrong they had done to God. Therefore Daniel identified the sin. The nation had (1) committed iniquity, (2) done wickedly, (3) rebelled, (4) departed from God's precepts, (5) disregarded the Lord's judgments, and (6) ignored the servants, God's prophets. This was among the worst of the errors, because these men had brought warnings that could have offset the punishment they were due for the other things

they had done. The sin was more than just individual sin, because the prophets had gone in God's name to the leaders of the nation as well as to the populace with warnings from God. To speak in God's name means this was done with God's full power and authority behind it. When a police officer issues a ticket, it is not on behalf of that individual officer but in the full authority of the government. Such was the case when the Hebrew nation ignored the warnings of God's prophets.

Daniel honestly acknowledged that God's punishment was just because the Hebrew people were at fault and brought their own punishment on themselves. They had broken their covenant commitment to a holy God, thereby drinking from His cup of wrath the full 70 years of captivity to the Babylonians and Persians. It did not matter where they were; the people could not escape what had been done to offend God, and Daniel included all of the people in his prayer. He expressed the shame they carried in direct contrast to the righteousness that belonged to God.

Like disobedient children who deserved the punishment in the first place, Judah and Israel had remained defiant and brought the full wrath of God upon themselves.

3. Daniel Makes His Request Known (vv. 17–19)

Daniel repented for himself and on behalf of the people, and asked God's forgiveness. He knew the power of prayer and was confident that God would respond to his cry as he asked God about His will for the future of the nation. Prayer reflects our dependence on God and our need for God's direction. Daniel went to God in sincerity, humility, and respect for God's will and righteousness.

Daniel knew that the time of punishment and banishment was ending, but he also knew that the only way the people could return to Jerusalem was by God's mercy. Daniel prayed

for God to "incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations" (Daniel 9:18). Judah needed God.

Daniel's plea was not just for the people or even for the sake of the nation. Daniel pleaded with God so that God could be glorified by all nations as the mighty God who delivered His people and restored His temple. God's name was most important. God would receive the glory, and God's people would lead the praise of His name as they returned to the temple and showed the nations the power of the great and terrible God they served. Daniel sought God's forgiveness and restoration. Daniel did not give into the crisis; he turned to God. So should we.

Search the Scriptures

1. How did Daniel physically humble himself before God (v. 3)?
2. In addition to confessing the wrong Judah had committed, what else did Daniel confess (vv. 4, 7)?
3. What did Daniel want God to do in forgiving His people (vv. 17–19)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. What benefit was there to Daniel's fasting and wearing the clothes of shame and mourning?
2. How would you describe Daniel's plea for forgiveness?
3. What can we learn about the spiritual disciplines of prayer and fasting from this lesson?

Liberating Lesson

In today's lesson, Daniel interceded for the nation and asked God's forgiveness. As you prayerfully consider the sins of our nation, how have we been disobedient as a nation before God? What biblical warnings have we ignored? How do our communities reflect our neglect of God's mandate to glorify Him before everyone?

Like Daniel, we must recognize sin and then move to ask God's forgiveness and direction. What

can we, as faithful Bible students, do to intervene on behalf of our country and our communities?

Application for Activation

Create a group that makes a commitment to God to intercede for others. Remember that the fellowship of believers provides strength and encouragement.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

Sources:

Life Application Study Bible, NLT. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1996.
Pfeiffer, Charles F., Howard F. Vos, John Rea, eds. *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary.* Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1998.
Strong, J. *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (electronic ed.). Ontario, Canada: Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1996.

Say It Correctly

Ahasuerus. uh-haz-yoo-EER-uhs

Chaldean. kal-DEE-uhn

Daily Bible Readings

DAY 141

Job 14-16

Psalms 58:6-11

DAY 142

Job 17-20

Psalms 59:1-9

DAY 143

Job 21-23

Psalms 59:10-17

DAY 144

Job 24-28

Psalms 60:1-4

DAY 145

Job 29-31

Psalms 60:5-12

DAY 146

Job 32-34

Psalms 61:1-5

DAY 147

Job 25-37

Psalms 61:5-8