

**Daniel**  
**Seventy Years & Seventy Weeks (Part 1)**  
**Daniel 9**  
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*Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher*  
*Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas*

Well, we continue our study tonight of the Book of Daniel. I invite you to take your Bibles and turn to Daniel, chapter 9. John Owen, the great English Puritan, laid down this one simple principle. He said, “what a person is in secret, on his knees before God, is what he truly is, and nothing more.” That's a sobering thought isn't it? What you are on your knees before God, in secret, is what you really are and nothing more.

Tonight, we learn who Daniel really was because we come in our study of Daniel's prophecy to the 9th chapter. The 9th chapter of Daniel records his prayer on behalf of His people and God's answer to that prayer. It's one of the longest prayers that are recorded in the Bible. It's also one of the greatest prayers in the Bible and, I will add, I think by the time we're done you will see it is one of the most helpful prayers in the Bible because 2,500 years after it was prayed and written, it still provides a wonderful pattern for our prayers today to follow. So, when we come to Daniel 9, let me summarize the chapter in this way: here in this chapter, God reveals a sweeping prophetic timeline of Israel's history - from the time of Daniel the Prophet to the end of this age - a sweeping prophetic timeline of Israel's history. And this amazing revelation comes in answer to the prayer of Daniel.

I've often been reminded of the psalmist's words and how short we sell them when he says the righteous cry and the Lord hears. Do you believe that? The righteous cry and the Lord hears.

Daniel 9 is a story of that reality. Now, this chapter divides easily into two parts. You have in verses 1-19 Daniel's prayer and then in verses 20-27, you have God's response. Tonight, we're going to consider Daniel's prayer. Let's call it a prayer for the end of Israel's captivity. It's the theme of verses 1-19.

Verse 1 begins with the occasion of the prayer. Notice what Daniel writes - “In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans....”

First of all, we just need to be reminded who this historical person is. Darius, we can't be absolutely sure, but there are two possibilities: he may have been the governor under Cyrus or Darius may actually a title for Cyrus himself - the first ruler of the Medo-Persian empire, We can't be absolutely certain and there are good arguments both ways. Either way, though, his first year would have been the year 538 BC. So, chapter 9, then, occurs approximately 12 years after chapter 8. You remember back in chapter 1; we saw that when Daniel was taken captive to Babylon in the year 605 BC, he was around 15 years of age - somewhere in his middle teenage years. So, if you do the math, that means in 538 BC, Daniel would have been almost 82 years old. That's when these events unfold. Now, notice that it's the first year of Darius. He's described, however, as the son of Ahasuerus. Now, don't confuse this with the Ahasuerus who married Esther in Esther 1:1. He ruled about 50 years later. Ahasuerus was not a personal name but a title. And so, here you meet another person with this title. Verse 1 says Darius was of Median descent. If this is referring to Cyrus, we know he was actually a Persian. His father was a Persian, but his mother was Median and in Jewish reckoning, a child with a mixed marriage was described according to his mother's descent. So, he was a Median descent. Notice that expression, "who was made king." That probably refers to God's sovereignty in placing him in his position. We've seen God sovereignly raising up rulers and putting them down throughout this book and here's just another reminder. He was made King by God. God placed him, notice, over the kingdom of the Chaldeans - that is, over all of the territory previously contained within the Babylonian Empire as he came to power with Medo-Persia. That's the occasion for the prayer. It was in the year 538 under Darius, the Mede, a major change has taken place in kingdoms.

Verse 2 brings us to the reason for this prayer. Notice, "In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the Word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet." Now, first of all, I want you to notice something unusual here in Daniel. You'll notice that the word "LORD" is in all capitals. You remember that when that happens in the Old Testament that is an indication that we are dealing with God's personal name. It's the name Yahweh in Hebrew. It appears nowhere else in Daniel, but it appears seven times in this chapter. Why is that? Because it is in Daniel's prayer to his God and Yahweh is God's covenant name - the name by which He had made Himself known to His people and through which He had made promises to His people? So, Daniel appeals in his prayer to that Covenant relationship that Yahweh has with His people and he calls Him by His Covenant name Yahweh seven times. Now, in this

verse we learn not only was Daniel a man of prayer. We've already seen that, right? Back in chapter 6 - you remember three times a day he went into his chamber and opened his windows towards Jerusalem, and he prayed. That was the regular pattern of his life. but he wasn't only a man of prayer. He was a man of scripture. Notice "the books" - "I, Daniel observed in the books." Daniel is involved in Bible study. That's what he's doing. Not only was he regularly engaged in prayer, but he was engaged in the reading and study of God's Word. "The books" is literally in Hebrew "the writings." It's a technical term for the Hebrew Bible. It included all of the scripture available in Daniel's day and obviously - because we're told here - it included the prophecy of Jeremiah. Jeremiah, by the way, was an older contemporary of Daniel. Jeremiah prophesied from about the year 627 BC possibly to as late as 561. So, during the time Daniel was in Babylon.

By the way, let me just stop and add - this underscores that the writings of the prophets were accepted as scripture even during their lifetimes. Daniel is looking at "the writings," the scripture, and that includes the writing of a prophet who was a contemporary of his. How were they accepted? Well, if they met the biblical qualifications of a prophet laid down in the Book of Deuteronomy, they were accepted even in their lifetime - even if they were hated. They were accepted as a spokesperson for God. Notice also, that Daniel refers to what Jeremiah wrote. Notice this expression "as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah." Daniel believed in verbal inspiration. He believed Jeremiah wrote the very Word of God - the Words of God. He goes on to say, "in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the Word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet. The number of years, specifically, "for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years." Daniel specifically observed in Jeremiah, "the number of years." Literally, the Hebrew says, "to completely fill up the desolations of Jerusalem." He understood from scripture exactly how long the incredible devastation to Jerusalem had to last and it had to last for 70 years. Where did he learn this? Turn to Jeremiah and let's see exactly what Daniel read.

Jeremiah chapter 25, and I'll begin in verse 1.

1 The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), 2 which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, 3 "From the

thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even to this day, [a]these twenty-three years the word of the LORD has come to me, and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened. 4 And the LORD has sent to you all His servants the prophets again and again, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear, 5 saying, ‘Turn now everyone from his evil way and from the evil of your deeds, and dwell on the land which the LORD has given to you and your forefathers forever and ever; 6 and do not go after other gods to [d]serve them and to [e]worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the work of your hands, and I will do you no harm.’

You see God's grace here. He's appealing again and again and again to these people. Verse 7.

7 Yet you have not listened to Me,” declares the Lord, “in order that you might provoke Me to anger with the work of your hands to your own harm.8 “Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Because you have not obeyed My words, 9 behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,’ declares the Lord, ‘and I will send to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them and make them a horror and a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. 10 Moreover, I will take from them the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp.

(All of the normal joys of life and even the normal industry of life)

11 This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

There it is.

12 ‘Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,’ declares the LORD, ‘for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation. 13 I will bring upon that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book which Jeremiah has prophesied against all the nations.

Jeremiah delivered this first prophecy of the 70 year of Babylonian exile in the year 605 BC. That's the year Daniel was taken to Babylon. That's when Daniel was about 15 years old. Sometime after 597 (and, I won't take you through all the ways I know that), but basically sometime after 597, Jeremiah, again confirmed that the Exile would last 70 years.

Turn over to Jeremiah 29.

And again, you can read starting in verse 1 the same sort of description of what God is going to do and how the people, once they arrive in Babel, are to live beginning in verse 4.

to all the exiles ... 5 'Build houses and live in them; and plant gardens and eat their produce. 6 Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters,

In other words, live, multiply. Verse 7: "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.' 8 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel." Don't let the prophets tell you something else. It's not going to happen like that. Verse 10, "When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place." And here's the verse so often taken out of context, "For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.'"

So, this is the passage. These are the two passages that Daniel the Prophet read in his study of the Word of God. Now, it was 70 years, but the question is why? Why 70 years?

Well, scripture is clear about that. Every 7th year of the Jewish calendar was to be a Sabbath year in which the land was not to be actively farmed. God promised that he would provide for them in that year and the following year as they planted. In fact, look at Leviticus 25. Leviticus 25 lays out this command.

1 The Lord then spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai, saying, 2 "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you come into the land which I shall give you, then the land shall have a sabbath to the Lord. 3 Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its crop, 4 but during the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath rest, a sabbath to the Lord; you shall not

sow your field nor prune your vineyard. 5 Your harvest's aftergrowth you shall not reap, and your grapes of untrimmed vines you shall not gather; the land shall have a sabbatical year. 6 All of you shall have the sabbath products of the land for food; yourself, and your male and female slaves, and your hired man and your foreign resident, those who live as aliens with you

Well, how is this going to work? Go down to verse 18

18 'You shall thus observe My statutes and keep My judgments, so as to carry them out, that you may live securely on the land. 19 Then the land will yield its produce, so that you can eat your fill and live securely on it. 20 But if you say, "What are we going to eat on the seventh year if we do not sow or gather in our crops?" 21 then I will so order My blessing for you in the sixth year that it will bring forth the crop for three years. 22 When you are sowing the eighth year, you can still eat old things from the crop, eating the old until the ninth year when its crop comes in.

God says, basically, you take every seventh year and you let the land rest. You trust me to provide and I will provide for you - as a test of their obedience to God. But, in their greed and their disregard for God and His law, Israel ignored that command and God had said if you don't do this, exile comes. Leviticus 26 verse 34, if you do this, then the land will enjoy it's sabbaths. I'm going to send you into exile.

the land will enjoy its sabbaths all the days of the desolation, while you are in your enemies' land; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. 35 All the days of its desolation it will observe the rest which it did not observe on your sabbaths, while you were living on it.

In other words, God says, "I'm going to catch up. You're going to be removed from the land and the land is going to be able to catch up the Sabbaths. And so, this is exactly what happened. 2 Chronicles.36 says that Nebuchadnezzar carried away the people to Babylon. They were servants to Him. Notice, "21 to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete."

Now, if you do the math, 70 years - that means Israel had not kept the required Sabbath years for 490 years. Each one of those 70 years made up for a seventh year that had been skipped. So, for 490 years. In other words, from the time of Saul to the time of the Babylonian captivity, Israel had not obeyed this command of God. The 70 years of captivity was at least, in part, God's punishment for their violation of the sabbath law. 70 years. Now, we've talked about the fact that it is 70 years and why 70 years but, how exactly are the 70 years calculated?

Well, there are two primary views of how the timeline of the 70 years of captivity unfolds and both of them have to do with the starting year.

The first view says the 70 years starts in the year 605 BC and lasts to 536-535 BC when the people are back in the land and they begin the process of restoration. Why 605? Well, that was the year the first Jewish captives – including Daniel – were taken to Babylon. That was the year that Judah first came under the authority of Babylon and 605 was the year when Jeremiah first prophesied about the 70 years. We saw that in the first prophecy in Chapter 25 of Jeremiah.

Others say no. It actually begins when the city and the temple are destroyed in 586 BC and it lasts to 516-515 BC. This is all based on the temple. The temple was destroyed in 586 BC and the temple rebuilding was completed in 516-515 BC. These are the two basic views.

So, which is true? Well, remember Daniel is praying this prayer and studying Jeremiah in the year 538. That's when he prays this prayer and that's when he believes the end of captivity is very close. So, it seems likely that Daniel is operating off the first timeline.

By the way, we learn something else about Daniel's view of scripture here in what he says as he says, "I prayed about the 70 years." Daniel believed the Bible contained predictive prophecy and Daniel believed that that predicted prophecy should be interpreted literally. He didn't spiritualize the 70 years. He did the math.

So, these are explaining to us this 70-year period and specifically the reason for his prayer as he studied Jeremiah's prophecy. Now, that brings us to verse 3 and the attitudes that just come seeping out of Daniel as he prays.

Verse 3 gives us the attitudes of prayer that were so much a part of his life. I'll call the first one "single mindedness." Call it determination. Call it focus. Whatever you like, but the bottom line

is, notice verse 3 says, “so I gave my attention to the Lord God.” Literally, the Hebrew says, “I gave my face to the Lord God.” I looked at Him and I just kept looking. He was determined to look to God in prayer. This is how we should pray as well.

He also prayed with faith. Notice verse 3 says, “so I gave my attention to the Lord God.” The Hebrew word in lower case letters – capital “L” lower case “ord” - is not Yahweh, that is the Hebrew word Adonai. It refers to God as the Owner, the Ruler, the Sovereign of all things. This is a recognition of God’s power and authority.

Why would Daniel refer to God as Adonai? One commentator, Miller, writes this, “not only was He able to hear Daniel’s prayer but He had the power to direct the affairs of world history in order to answer. He is Adonai, the Ruler, the Sovereign One. And, Daniel was committed to that reality. He had faith in the God who could move history.

Thirdly, his prayer was marked by persistence. “So, I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications.” The Hebrew word for “prayer” simply means intercession. He was interceding on behalf of his people. The word for “supplications” – notice, it’s plural – it means to repeatedly plead to God for mercy. There is persistence in this. “I determined to set my face to God in order to continually plead for His mercy.”

And, then there is humility. “With fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.” Fasting demonstrated the person’s profound concern about the issue. Why would you fast and then pray? You’re essentially saying, “the issue on my heart, the issue I’m praying about is more important to me than food.” And, along with that he wore, notice, sackcloth. That’s a coarse, rough cloth and he put ashes on his head. In the ancient world, these were all expressions of grief but also of humility before God, of contrition when sin is involved. You see it in Jonah. You see it with Esther. This is his humility before God.

These are the attitudes with which you and I ought to approach God. A single-mindedness. Set your face to look to God. Come in faith because He’s the Adonai, He’s the sovereign One who can do everything that you ask. Come in persistence with supplications - repeatedly seeking His mercy. And, come in humility.

Those are the attitudes of prayer.



Now, that brings us in verse 4-19 to the content of this prayer. Now, just to give you a summary, look down at verse 20 because verse 20, Daniel, himself provides us an overview of his prayer. “Now while I was speaking and praying and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God.” That’s what this prayer is all about. But, more than that, this prayer is a model prayer for us. It’s a wonderful pattern of prayer for us to copy. We will see in this prayer that it consists of three essential elements. There is, first of all, adoration. Then, there is confession. And then, there is petition. Adoration, Confession, Petition.

Let’s look at each of those. First of all, adoration in verse 4, “I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed and said, “Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and steadfast love for those who love Him and keep His commandments.” Obviously, Daniel’s heart’s heavy with what he’s going to pray about but he doesn’t begin with his request. It’s not to say that we can never do that. You see some of the Psalmists in the midst of their trouble immediately jumping into their requests. But far more often, you see the prayers of scripture beginning with reminding yourself and God that you understand who He is - and adoring Him, worshipping Him.

And, that’s where Daniel begins. Now, it becomes clear in his prayer that Daniel's mind was filled with the Word of God. His studying of Jeremiah wasn't a one-off thing. It was the pattern of his life because this prayer is filled with allusions to the Old Testament - including Deuteronomy 1 Kings 8 and, yes, Jeremiah. Let's look at how he adored his God.

He adored Him, first of all, because He is gracious. Verse 4 says, “I prayed to Yahweh.” Using “Yahweh” is Daniel's way of reminding God - reminding himself and God - of God’s relationship to His people - the covenant in which He has entered with them. Yahweh is their God by covenant, and He is the gracious, covenant-keeping God. Back in Exodus 6, this is how God revealed Himself and that's how He became known to His people – Yahweh, The One who is. When God says that it's “I Am.” When we say “Yahweh” or “the LORD” as it’s translated here, we say “He is.” He’s simply “the One who Is.” And He is the God who has made Himself enter into relationship with us. He is gracious. He is also Father. “I prayed to the LORD my God”- Yahweh, my God. Daniel addresses Yahweh as “my God.” That is a couple things. First of all, it's profession of faith. It reminds me of the shaman in Deuteronomy 6: “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God is one!” He is our God. And so, Daniel is essentially saying “Yahweh is my God as opposed to all of the false

gods around me in Babylon.” But it also, when he says, “my God,” it also underscores the basis on which Daniel could approach God. He was one who belonged to God. He was one of God's children and that's how you and I approach God as well.

He also adores God because He's Sovereign. Verse 4, “Alas, O Lord” - by the way, “O” is a Hebrew particle of entreaty. It's something like our “please.” “Please, O Lord.” “Lord” is again Adonai and it underscores that Yahweh is The Sovereign One. He adores God because He is great and awesome. Notice verse 4, “the great and awesome God.” The Hebrew word translated awesome comes from a word that means “to fear.” God's greatness inspires fear and awe in all of those who know Him and interact with Him.” He is one to be feared.

He is also faithful and loving. Verse 4 goes on to say, “who keeps His covenant and steadfast love for those who love Him and keep his commandments.”

Now, you know this word “loving kindness” is the word “hesed” that I always read “steadfast love” because that's the nature of this word. It is a word that has two components: it is love and loyalty in the context of a covenant relationship. It's what happens in marriage. You stand at the altar and you say, “I do.” You enter into a covenant with that person. You're saying, “I'm going to love this person and I'm going to remain loyal to this person.” That's “hesed” and that's what God has for us.

Notice, “covenant” here probably refers to the covenant God made with Abraham since it was in that covenant that God promised the land to Israel - in Genesis 12 verses 1 – 3, in Genesis 15 verses 18 - 21. So, the covenant here God keeps His covenant is that covenant He made with Abraham. And, Daniel is saying, “God, here we are in Babylon. We're a long way from the land you promised. You made a covenant. And, I'm appealing to You to keep the promises you made in that covenant. Keep your steadfast love.” Steadfast love obviously refers to the love and loyalty that God has promised Himself to have in this covenant with His people to faithfully keep the promises that He has made. By the way, in Hebrew both “covenant” and “steadfast love” are definite. “The covenant,” again, probably a reference to the Abrahamic covenant and “the steadfast love,” the steadfast love that causes you to keep those promises. Daniel appeals to God's love for His people and God's faithfulness to the covenants that He makes. You understand God, when God makes a covenant (by the way, let me just define that for you, in case you're not as familiar with it. A covenant is simply a legally binding promise in the context of a relationship. That's a

covenant. A legally binding promise in the context of a relationship. God makes covenants with us.), He enters into a legally binding promise in the context of the relationship He's entered into with us and He always keeps those promises. He always respects that covenant. As Leon Wood writes, "God keeps all the covenants He makes and He always extends steadfast love to those who, in frailty and inability, failed to live up to them."

By the way, notice in verse 4, Daniel makes his appeal to God to restore the people to the land - not on the basis of all the Israelites but specifically on behalf of the faithful, true believers in God. Those who love God and show their love by their obedience to His commands. Because, in the end, obedience is just love demonstrated. Isn't that what Jesus said in John 14? "If you love Me," what? "You will keep my commandments." So, this adoration, if I could summarize it, focuses on God's greatness and His goodness. The most profound theological understanding eventually brings us back to the simplest kindergarten prayer. "God is great. God is good."

Now, that brings us out of adoration into the confession of sin - verses 5 - 14. Now, let me just make one point here that's very important before we begin to look at the prayer - the confession itself. Throughout this prayer, Daniel identified himself with and associates himself with the people of Israel. And so, he confesses not only his own sin but also the sin of the people of Israel. That's what he said in verse 20 as though it were his own. But make sure you understand what Daniel was not saying. Daniel was not saying that he had been part of the rebellious, idolatrous majority who had brought God's wrath upon the nation and sent them to exile. And he was not claiming that he was personally guilty for the sin of others. That is a very important point. Unfortunately, today, there are some well-intentioned people who are using Daniel 9 to say that you and I can actually be guilty for the sins of other people. Folks, that is contrary to the clear teaching of the Old Testament. Read Ezekiel 18. Over and over again, God says the soul that sins is the soul that dies. I'm not going to deal with you based on the sins of your father's or the sins of your children. I'm going to deal with you based on your own sins. That is an inviolable principle of scripture. I am never guilty for the sins of someone else - only my own. Daniel prays the way he does here, because he had experienced the result of God's wrath upon the nation because of the nation's sin. And so, he confessed Israel's sin as if it were his own in order to intercede on their behalf - to plead for God's forgiveness and God's restoration of the nation. One other observation about this prayer that makes me feel a little better about my own prayers, you'll notice as we go

through it that Daniel goes back and forth between the second and third person. As you read this prayer, sometimes he addresses God directly in the second person and then in the same prayer he addresses Him in the third person as Him. That happens to me and obviously, it happened to Daniel. It also happens, by the way, to Ezra in Ezra chapter 9 verses 5 - 15.

So, let's consider then the pattern of Daniel's confession and I'm going to use Daniel's confession here as a pattern for our own confession. So, as you see Daniel confessing his sin and the sins of his people, see it as a pattern for how our confession should run. First of all, true confession of sin begins by identifying sin's true nature. We see this in verses 5 - 6. There are six different aspects of Israel's sin described here. Notice verse 5, "we have sinned." The Hebrew word means "to miss the mark." In fact, it's used literally that way in Judges 20 verse 16 when it talks about 700 Benjamites who could sling a stone at a hair and not, what? Miss. Not miss. They didn't miss the target. Sin, using this word, is like missing the target that God has set. What God requires of us, the target He demands that we hit, we miss. Paul puts it this way in Romans 3:23, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." It's like an arrow aimed at the target and it falls before it gets to the target. It's "to miss the mark." He goes on to say, "we have committed iniquity." Hebrew word "iniquity" comes from a word that means "to bend or to twist." It describes sin as twisted, as perverted. Think of it this way, the idea is when we sin, we leave the straight road that God has set - the path of righteousness - and we make our paths crooked. That's the idea. Another word, he uses in verse 5 is, "we have acted wickedly." The word means "to be guilty of a crime." Guilty of a crime against God or others. What was Israel's crime? Notice the next one - "we have rebelled." We have refused to submit to God's authority. By the way, as you think about this, don't just think about Daniel and the children of Israel, think about your own confession. This is how you're to identify your own sin. "Lord, I missed the mark," You set the target and I didn't even hit it. I haven't come close. My sin is like leaving the straight path You've set and pursuing crooked paths. My sin is a crime against You. It is rebellion against Your authority. And then he says, "we have rebelled" and this is how we've rebelled - "even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances." They simply refused to obey God's commands and His ordinances. "Ordinances" is God's authoritative declarations about what behavior is acceptable and what behavior is not acceptable. In verses 11 and 23, he's talking about the law of Moses. He's talking about the law of God, but it was obvious rebellion against all of scripture as well.

Verse 6 – “Moreover” (My family gets on to me all the time for using that word “moreover” but there you go, it’s a biblical word.). “Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers and all the people of the land.” Now, notice, he’s changing here. In addition to the written word, in grace and mercy, God also sent His servants, the prophets, to call His people to repentance. We read about that in Jeremiah. By the way, notice again, the clear reference to inspiration – “Your servants who spoke in Your name.” Or, under Your authority. And the prophets here, we’re told, spoke both to the leaders and to the people. And, how did the people respond? “We have not listened.” Clearly, that didn’t include Daniel. Didn’t include his three friends. Didn’t include other faithful believers throughout the nation. But, as a whole, the nation refused to listen to God’s gracious command and God’s invitation to repent. You see, not only had they not obeyed God’s law, but when God sent His prophets to call their disobedience to their attention, they didn’t listen then either. They were twice guilty. Just as with Daniel, when you and I make true confession of sin, it always includes a recognition of sin’s true nature. It’s missing the mark. It’s a twisted perversion. It’s a crime against God. It is rebellion against God’s rightful authority in my life. It is a refusal to listen to God’s Word. It is a refusal to repent when confronted.

True confession continues by accepting sin’s just consequences. Verses 7 and 8. Verse 7 – “Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day.” In the original, there’s an emphatic contrast. Literally, it’s translated like this, “To You, O Lord, is the righteousness, but to us is shame of face.” Shame of face here is the disgrace that Israel experienced in the destruction of their homeland, of their temple, and in their captivity in a foreign land. And that open shame that they were subjected to continued even to the day that Daniel prayed this prayer. Notice this “shame,” verse 7, says, “extended to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and all Israel” (so, the North and the South) “those who are nearby, those who are far away in all the countries to which you have driven them.” Israel’s sin continued to bring disgrace and, therefore, shame upon the entire nation. Wherever they were - whether it was the northern tribes in Assyria or the southern tribes in Babylon or others who fled to Egypt - wherever they were, they enjoyed shame of face. Verse 7 goes on to say, “because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against You. Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You.” Daniel freely admitted that the shame that Israel was experiencing was fully deserved and was just. Biblical confession of sin always looks

like this. You want to know whether your confession is genuine? Ask yourself, are you good with whatever God does? And, are you willing to say whatever you do, God is fair? Whatever You do is just. I plead for mercy but whatever you do is just. This is David in Psalm 51, verse 4. So, “against You, You only,” he says, “I have sinned and done what is evil in your sight so that you are justified when you speak and blameless when you judge.”

Daniel was accepting the just consequences of sin. He’s saying, “look, we have shame of face and you know, what? We deserve it.”

Thirdly, true confession also includes hoping in sin’s only remedy. Verse 9, “To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him.” In Hebrew, both “compassion” and “forgiveness” are plural. Sounds pretty awkward in English but literally, it reads like this “to the Lord our God belong compassions and forgivenesses.” The plural may be, in Hebrew, there’s a plural of intensity. You make something plural when you want to talk about how great it is. So, it may be saying, “God’s compassion is great and His forgiveness is great.” Or, the plural may refer to God’s multiple repeated acts of compassion and forgiveness. Again, and again, and again, he says, “God, You’ve shown us compassion and You have shown us forgiveness.” This, God, is who You are. And, of course, all of scripture and our own experience testifies to that, doesn’t it? God was willing to extend compassion and forgiveness. Notice, how he puts it even though Israel had rebelled against Him. Folks, that is our hope. That’s why we come confessing our sins. Because to the Lord our God belong compassions and forgivenesses. We’ve all rebelled against God in different ways and to a different extent and we all need His compassion. We all need His forgiveness in order to be made right with Him and there is hope because our Sovereign God is also compassionate and forgiving. Remember His declaration of His own nature? In Exodus He says, “I am gracious and compassionate.” And then He adds, “Not only am I abounding in steadfast love but I am the One who forgives iniquity transgression and sin.” God says, “that’s My nature. That’s just who I am.”

Listen, if you’re here tonight (and I don’t want to assume everyone here tonight is a believer in Jesus Christ), if you’re here tonight, you are a sinner like the rest of us and your sins deserve not only temporal judgment from God but eternal judgment from God. And that is, in fact, what your sins will receive, according to the scripture. According to Jesus Christ Himself unless you repent and believe in Him. Unless you repent of your sins and put your faith in the perfect life of Jesus

Christ lived in the place of all who would believe in Him to satisfy the just demands of God. Then He died - and He died in the place to satisfy the justice of God against all who would believe in Him. And then God raised Him from the dead as the testimony that He'd accepted that sacrifice. And we're told that there is no other name, the book of Acts says, given under heaven whereby we must be saved - rescued from our sins. Jesus Himself said, "no man comes to the Father, but by Me." I plead with you tonight to cry out for the compassion and forgiveness of God that's found in Jesus Christ. That's your only hope. It's my only hope.

True Confession hopes in sin's only remedy. It's the nature of God and His compassion and forgiveness. True confession also includes admitting God's faithfulness in judgment. Verses 10 – 13. Verses 10 and 11 make very similar points to what we've already seen. He says, "nor have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets. Indeed, all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice." That's essentially a restatement of what we've already seen. And then he turns, in verse 11, to the consequences of their sin. "So the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him." Israel had sinned against God in the ways described. Therefore, God had carried out the curse and the oath. The oath is simply the judgment that God had sworn He would bring. That's His oath. Notice, God poured this out on the nation. The curse God brought against the nation of Israel didn't come in a trickle. It came in a flood. Specifically, the curse and the sworn judgment were, notice, "written in the law of Moses the servant of God." The specifics of God's curse for disobedience are described in two passages in the Old Testament. One of those is Leviticus 26 verses 14 - 39. The other is Deuteronomy 28 verses 15 - 68. If I could summarize that, I would say this: the curse that God promised, that He swore for disobedience by His people included such things as a lack of rain, poor crops, rampant disease, infertility, being defeated by their enemies, and worst of all, it involved being exiled from the land of promise. Verse 12, "Thus He has confirmed" (literally, in the Hebrew, "He has caused to stand") "His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity." Yahweh had promised in the law that if Israel broke the covenant they made with Him, He would bring very specific judgment upon them. And Daniel reaffirms, or affirms, that God didn't lie and "the great calamity" he calls it, that God had predicted - the exile of the nation – had, in fact, come. Dale Ralph Davis writes, "Yahweh spelled out in the explicit, gory, scary, and unnerving detail the

multiple disasters he would inflict upon the people who turned away from Him. Daniel's point is that Yahweh has been faithful in His anger. He has inflicted upon unfaithful Israel precisely what He said He would." Davis goes on to say this, "We can forget this. We sing, 'Great is Thy faithfulness' and forget that there is a dark side to that faithfulness. God will always do what God said He would do." Notice, verse 12 says Israel's great calamity was unique - "for under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what was done to Jerusalem." You say, "now why would he say that? I mean, obviously many nations had experienced defeat at the hands of their enemies - the destruction of their homes, the destruction of their country, even exile. So, what made Israel unique?" Well, it's because those other countries in their case, their gods were lifeless idols completely unable to defend them. But in Israel's case, they were the people who belong to the true and living God and the true and living God had allowed His city and His temple to be destroyed and His people to be carried off into exile. Nothing like this had ever happened before. But no one should be surprised because it was exactly what God said would happen. Verse 13, "As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us." Daniel admitted that Israel was getting exactly what it deserved and what God had promised. He confirmed that God was both faithful and just in the chastening that He'd brought. When you and I come in confession of our sin, we have to admit God's faithfulness even in His judgment, "God, it's what You said."

There's one more part of true confession and that is cultivating Godly sorrow over sin. Remarkably, even though God had allowed this great calamity to come upon Israel as a whole, the nation had not repented. Look at verse 13, "yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to your truth." That's what Israel didn't do. But by explaining what Israel should have done, Daniel describes for us in Old Testament terms what repentance or Godly sorrow for sin actually looks like. Look at that verse again. First of all, he says, seek the grace of God, "the favor of God." The Hebrew is very picturesque. Literally it says, "smooth the face of Yahweh." You get the idea. He's angry. We approach Him and seek His favor, seek His grace, and see His face smooth out. Two: turn from your sin, turn from your iniquity. And three: give attention to God's truth. That is: listen and obey God's Word. Now, do you see those three components there in verse 13? To seek God's favor is a beautiful description of faith. I mean, that's how faith is described right? In Hebrews 11 verse 6, "without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek



Him.” So, to seek God's favor is faith. Turning from sin, the second one, and giving attention to God's Word are equally fitting descriptions of repentance.

Daniel admitted that although that's what true faith and repentance look like; the nation had not responded to God's judgment in that way. The people of Israel were unchanged. They were unbroken. They were unrepentant - even in exile.

Verse 14, “therefore the Lord has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us.” It's an interesting Hebrew expression. Literally it says, “the Lord watched over the calamity and brought it on us.” The idea is that God kept a watch on this disaster just in case He had to use it. And then He realized He did. Because after sending prophet after prophet, plea after plea, the people didn't respond. The judgment from God did not come because God is capricious or somehow delights in inflicting pain on people. Verse 14 says, “for the Lord our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice.” Daniel says, “listen, our crimes demanded justice and God has only done what was right.” There's a heart of repentance. The Babylonian captivity was fully deserved. What a prayer! What a prayer of confession.

As we finish our time, very briefly, let me give you two primary lessons that just jump out at me from what we've studied tonight. First of all, one of the primary marks of a genuine Christian - of a genuine believer - is that you will continually confess and mourn over your sins. Herman Vel Camp writes this, “what distinguishes us from the world - is that by the grace of God, we have learned to see our wickedness for what it is and that we confess our sins.” The church - think about this - the church is the only body on Earth that confesses sin. Where the confession of sin dies out, the church is no longer the church. It's interesting in Ezekiel 36, it describes those who have been regenerated. Listen to this Ezekiel 36:31. Here's after somebody's been regenerated. That's us. “Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations.” Dale Ralph Davis writes, “Ezekiel's point is clear - loathing ourselves over our sins is a mark, or evidence, of having a new heart and a new spirit. A new spirit will produce a new sadness that mourns and agonizes over sin bringing about what the Puritans called ‘perpetual broken heartedness’ and when there is true confession like that, there is forgiveness.” God is, “faithful and just” we're told in 1 John 1:9. Faithful to Himself. Faithful to His promises. And just. How is He just to forgive? Because that sin is already punished in the person of His Son. But I think the greatest lesson that we learn from

Daniel's prayer is this: allow the scripture - especially God's promises - to drive and shape and direct your prayers. Go back to Jeremiah. Go back to Jeremiah 29 because this is what Daniel was reading that initiated this prayer. I intentionally skipped these verses. Go back to Jeremiah 29 and look at verse 10, "For thus says the Lord, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.'" Verse 12, "Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you," declares the Lord, "and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile." Daniel read those promises and how did he respond? He prayed. Because that's exactly how God said it would unfold. In his study of scripture, Daniel saw that God had given specific promises about the duration of the captivity and that God would respond to the prayers of His people. And what did he do? He took that as his responsibility to ask the Lord to fulfill His promise because God always achieves His ends through means. Which brings me back to why. Why did Daniel record this prayer for us? I think, in part, because it tells us that the restoration of Israel to the land occurred not only because it was prophesied but in answer to Daniel's prayer - just as Jeremiah had said it would happen. There is, listen to this carefully, don't miss the point. Here's the punchline: there is a genuine connection between the prayers of God's people and the events that take place in history - both the history of nations and the history of our lives and the lives of those we love as well. The pattern is simple: the promises of the Word of God should drive us to prayer. As one author puts it, "it's as if God's promises have Velcro on them and our prayers are meant to get stuck there." Sinclair Ferguson points out that, in the end, Daniel was just talking to God like a child to his parent, "Lord, You promised. You promised." And he goes on to say the prayer of faith asks in unwavering trust for what God has already promised to do. Let me ask you: do you pray the scripture? Do you read the promises of God and take those promises - whether it's a promise of forgiveness in response to confession, or whether it's a promise of Salvation through Christ, or whether it's a promise of His care and His provision for you, or on and on the list could go - do you take the promises of scripture and let them drive you to God in prayer saying, "God, Father, You, You promised?" That should be the motivation for our prayers. Let's pray together.

Father. Thank You for Your Word. And thank you for how it instructs us about how to pray. Thank you that in Daniel we see both a man of prayer and a man of the Word and how those two great realities intersect. Lord, may we allow what we see and read - the precious promises You've given us in your Word - may those energize and direct our prayers We pray in Jesus name. Amen.