

The sermon

Intro

Is your prayer life in a rut? Maybe you can't pray for longer than 2 minutes? Maybe you don't know what to pray? Maybe your mind wanders when you sit down to pray? Maybe you don't enjoy prayer? Maybe you're tired of praying the same old things?

At the entry way there's copies of *Praying the Bible* by Don Whitney for you to take. Don has a simple, practical method that will give more than enough prayer content.

We can also learn from Daniel's prayer.

READ PASSAGE

Body

Passage Focus

We'll look at why Daniel's praying these things. Then we'll uncover seven gospel points in Daniel's prayer.

Context of Daniel's Prayer (9:1-2, 16-19) – why is Daniel praying these things?

Daniel prayed these things in 539 BC, the first year of Darius' reign (9:1-2).

Daniel was reading "the books" and he discovered something. These books were the Old Testament Scriptures written by that time. Moses, Jeremiah, etc.

Something in Jeremiah stood out: ***"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"*** (9:2).

Here's what Jeremiah wrote:

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. – Jeremiah 25:11-12

God sent Nebuchadnezzar to punish Judah (Jer 25:9-10; Dan 1:1-2) because Judah violated the stipulations of the Old Covenant, the Law of Moses (Deut 28:45-68).

Daniel admits this:

"we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules." – 9:5

"in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you." – 9:7

"for we have rebelled against him and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by walking in his laws" – 9:9-10

"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." – 9:11

"He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity." – 9:12

"As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us;" – 9:13

Judah violated the covenant. God punished them with exile.

But Jeremiah 25:11-12 said Judah's servitude to Babylon would be limited to 70 years. After the 70 years, Babylon itself would be punished by God.

Jeremiah 29:10 adds:

"For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. – Jeremiah 29:10

When the 70 years are up, God would visit Judah by bringing them back to their homeland.

Since the end of the 70 years coincides with punishment on Babylon and return to their homeland, the 70 years must be 605-538 BC. It was in 605 BC that Daniel arrived (Dan 1:1) and it was in 538 BC that Cyrus, king of Persia, gave the decree for Judah to return to their homeland and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-2:1).

The 70 years need not be exact to the very day. It was approximately 70 years.

So what exactly is Daniel asking?

Doing his math, Daniel sees the 70 years are about up. So he prays for God to keep his promises.

"let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem" – 9:16

"make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate." – 9:17

"Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name." – 9:18

"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." – 9:19

Forgive us rebels and restore the city you burned to the ground and depopulated. Do this for your own glory.

So what Daniel's doing is praying God's promises (and character) back to God. We too can pray like this.

Give us this day our daily bread, – Matthew 6:11

Jesus is implying God answers this request. So we pray something like, "God you've told me to ask for financial provision, so Lord provide for my need of employment, a working vehicle, clothing, etc."

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. – Matthew 6:13

"God you've told me to ask for help with temptation, so I'm asking you to help me because I'm tempted to lust or use pornography or hate this person or be lazy in my schoolwork or lie about this matter or cause discord in the church."

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. –

Philippians 1:6

"God you've told me you've began an internal work in my heart. I'm really struggling with believing it's even possible for me to love this person or be joyful or overcome this addictive substance. Help me to believe you are powerful to change who I am."

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. – Philippians 4:13

"God you've told me that your empowering grace is sufficient in my weakness. I'm struggling to cope with my cancer or I'm really lonely and want to be married or marriage is really hard or I'm really discouraged by my child's life decisions. Sustain me in my weakness."

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. –

James 1:5-6

“God you’ve told me that you provide wisdom when I ask. I really don’t know how to relate to this person or I don’t know how to solve my financial crisis or my life is just too busy and I don’t know what to keep and what to cut out. Show me how to navigate life.”

Bring the Bible into your lives! Pray God’s promises back to him!

Gospel

Daniel doesn’t pray about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But his prayer is full of gospel concepts.

Point 1: God is sovereign

Daniel keeps hammering God’s rule over history.

There’s another aspect to God’s sovereignty. God created and owns all that is. Us, the earth, the stars. We’re at God’s disposal. He can do with us whatever he wants. He can command whatever he wants. He’s the boss.

You don’t get pulled over by a police officer and start bossing them around. You don’t walk into the office on your first day of the job and start telling your supervisor what to do. Same with God.

With Israel, God stipulated in writing (Law of Moses) how he would relate to her. God didn’t send out a survey to get Israel’s opinion. God wrote the law without their input.

Same with personal salvation. We can’t make up our own brand of spirituality. We can’t create our own pathways to God. We have no say.

Only God decides the way of salvation.

Point 2: God is opposed to sin

Daniel’s prayer says a lot about sin. Daniel asks God:

“let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins, and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us.” – 9:16

Anger and wrath express God’s attitude, emotional response towards sin. Sin makes God white hot, seething mad. Other Scriptures say sin grieves God.

Daniel describes Judah’s sin:

“we have sinned” (9:5) = missing the mark, falling short of God’s standard.

“done wrong” (9:5) = bend, twist, distort God’s law. Crooked behavior that perverts God’s law. This is the verb form of “iniquities” in 9:13.

“acted wickedly” (9:5) = to behave contrary to God’s law, the opposite of righteousness. Things like murder, violence, fraud, oppression.

“rebelled” (9:5) = rebelling against God’s authority. Sin is revolt against God.

“turning aside” (9:5) = a motion verb. Turning away from God by not doing his commands or pursuing sin or both.

“refusing to obey your voice” (9:11) uses the same verb and conveys stubbornness.

“We have not listened” (9:6) = failure to pay attention to God's word. In one ear and out the other. Ignoring what God says. A hearer but not a doer. “have not obeyed the voice of the LORD” (9:10) is the same verb.

“treachery” (9:7) = breaking God's law as a conscious act of treachery, disloyalty, unfaithful.

“transgressed” (9:11) = a motion verb. Crossing over the boundary of God's law, moving outside of God's law.

Summary: Sin is failure to conform to God's law. Sin is distorting God's design for his image bearers. Sin is failure to listen to God and practice what he says. Sin is crossing a boundary God has set. Sin is a turning away from God's commands to pursue a life contrary to God's law. Sin is a conscious act of disloyalty, unfaithfulness to God. Sin is an act of rebellion against God's authority.

Yes we sin against people. But sin is always a response to God's word.

Does any of this ring a bell? Do you find yourself saying this is me? Keep tracking with me. There's hope for rebels.

Point 3: God punishes sin

Judah in Babylonian exile was God acting in judgment against his chosen people.

God refuses to overlook our sin as well. One way or another our sin will be paid for. In fact, every sin ever committed will be paid for. If we've trusted in Jesus, Jesus has taken the punishment for us. Every sin we've ever committed, past, present, future had been laid on Jesus.

If we persist in unbelief, disloyalty, rebellion, in being a hearer only, every sin we've ever committed, past, present, future will be laid on us in hell. A place of suffering characterized by “*weeping and gnashing of teeth.*”

The gospel message is this. Jesus died on the cross for our sins. The Father poured out his wrath on Jesus so that whoever believes can receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. That's forever living with God in a place where sin and suffering and death are no more.

Point 4: God is right to punish sin

“To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame,” – 9:7

“Therefore [because they've failed to repent] 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, [sending them into exile] and we have not obeyed his voice.” – 9:14

“we have sinned, we have done wickedly” – 9:15

God you were right to punish our sin. We were wrong to sin against you. We've merited your judgment with our deeds. We've brought shame on ourselves by turning against you.

We humans always bear the responsibility for our sins. God is always right to punish our sins. God is right to humble Nebuchadnezzar. God is right to discipline erring believers. The Father is right to pour out his wrath on Jesus. God is right to punish sinners in hell.

This is a good thing. This means God isn't indifferent to evil. This means God cares about theft, home break-ins, violence, schemes to defraud you of your money, rape, racism, etc. People today call out for justice. Sometimes their cries fall on deaf ears. When the books are opened, every injustice ever committed will be dealt with by God.

A righteous God gets heated about sin. A righteous God punishes sin.

Point 5: God is merciful to sinners who repent

"To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness," – 9:9

"For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy." – 9:18

We don't plead our excellence to God. No, we plead our unworthiness. We turn to God by appealing to his mercy.

Judah's present failure was a failure to repent.

yet we have not entreated the favor of the LORD our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth. – 9:13

The pathway to God's mercy was a turning from sin and a turning to God's word. That's we turn from sin by turning to God in faith. We turn from rebellion to trust in God's promises. Trusting God's promises we heed his word.

Repenting is doing a 360 about face. Turning in the opposite direction. Turning from indifference and revolt to trust.

Those who turn to God on God's terms will find him a *"great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments"* (9:4).

God's relationship with his people is a loving relationship. God's steadfast love means he has obligated himself to *"never leave you nor forsake you"* (Heb 13:5) and he is actively working for you every day of your life (Ps 23:6).

How can I tell if a person is a Christian? Do they love God? Do they keep his commandments? That's how Daniel defines the believer. Or are they just a hearer? That's how Daniel defines the wicked.

Trust in God's word and experiencing God's mercy results in joyful obedience.

Point 6: Repent and keep repenting

Maybe you're a hearer only? The good news is that God is willing to receive any sinner who turns to him. God will forgive anything. Jesus' death is worthy to satisfy God's wrath for the worst thing you've ever done. The good news is that God will pledge himself to you if you repent. Jesus receives unfaithful rebels when they repent.

In case we're mistaken, the Christian isn't instantly and miraculously delivered from all sinful attitudes and behaviors the moment they first repent and believe. Depression and anger and hatred don't evaporate upon conversion. In fact, the person who's believed for 70 years still wrestles against sinful attitudes and behaviors.

Thus, the need to keep repenting daily. This is called self-examination. Daily taking stock of my life and measuring it against God's word. This keeps us from complacency. This keeps us from blind spots. This keeps us from being hearers only.

We keep living the Christian life the way we begin the Christian life. In faith and repentance.

Point 7: Live for God's honor from here on out

Daniel's appeal to God is do this for your own glory.

"and for your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary," – 9:17

Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name." – 9:19

God, do it for your own reputation.

Christian, call out to God to help you repent. Call out to God to help you kill sin. Call out to God to help you fight temptation. Call out to God to sustain you in weakness. Call out to God for wisdom. Call out to God to provide for your material needs.

And appeal to God's reputation when you ask for these things. Do these things so that your greatness and righteousness and steadfast love and mercy will shine in my life.