

Daniel Took Repentance seriously

by Charles Price

This sermon by Charles Price focuses on the importance of repentance, highlighting the need to change our minds about God, ourselves, and sin. Through the prayer of Daniel, the sermon emphasizes the righteousness and mercy of God, the recognition of personal sinfulness, and the availability of forgiveness and cleansing through Christ. The message calls for genuine repentance and a shift from self-dependency to reliance on Christ's righteousness and power.

Scripture: Daniel 9:4, Isaiah 1:18, Romans 2:4, 1 John 1:9, James 4:8, Psalm 103:12, Romans 8:1, Galatians 2:20, 1 John 1:7

Topics: "Repentance", "Reliance on Christ"

Description

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Transcript

We're moving now to the stage in the evening when we are approaching hearing God's Word. I'm going to introduce Charles Price now, and that will be followed by the reading of Scripture, and as that's finishing then Charles will come up and bring us God's Word for the evening. And so if you're a parent, this would be a good time for you to slip out.

You know you can watch Charles preach on TV. When you get back to your chalet with your children, or some of you will slip back into the top and catch his message in a few moments time. Charles Price is a husband and a father.

I think it's a little known fact in evangelicalism that Charles and I share the same birthday. I'm almost certain that's true, July the 3rd. That's true, we're both born on July the 3rd, but I think it's true to say that Charles Price was born several decades before me on July the 3rd.

You can make your own mind up about that when you see him in just a moment. Charles Price is a published author of many books. You'll have seen them in Christian bookshops.

You'll see them here at Spring Harvest Word Alive in the Wesley Owen book area. He's been associated for years with the Cape and Ray movement and his preaching has taken him not just to the Cape and Ray movement in the Lake District here, but all over the world. And soon he's going to be leaving these shores to take up the position of the senior minister at the People's Church in Toronto.

This is a church with an enormous Christian heritage of sending people overseas in mission among other things. So we're really thrilled that Charles is here tonight and going to open God's Word to us in just a moment. But before he does, we're going to ask for the scripture to be opened as we think tonight about the character of Daniel.

So prepare now to hear God's Word. In the first year of Darius, son of Xerxes, who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom, in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the scriptures according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.

I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed, O Lord, the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands. We have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled.

We have turned away from your commands and laws. 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. Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame.

The men of Judah and the people of Jerusalem and all Israel both near and far, and all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. O Lord, we and our kings, our princes, and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him.

We have not obeyed the Lord our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us because we have sinned against you.

You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing upon us a great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem. Just as it is written in the law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us.

Yet, we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. The Lord did not hesitate to bring the disaster upon us, for the Lord our God is righteous in everything he does, yet we have not obeyed him. Now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name, a name that endures to this day, we have sinned, we have done wrong.

O Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. Our sins and the iniquity of our fathers have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us. Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant.

For your sake, O Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, O God, and hear. Open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your name.

We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, listen. O Lord, forgive.

O Lord, hear and act. For your sake, O my God, do not delay because your city and your people bear your name. Well, thank you, Janet.

That was so well read. Thank you very much, indeed. That was Daniel chapter 9. That's the basis of our study tonight, and we're going to talk about this whole theme of repentance.

In order to do so, we're going to look into this chapter in Daniel chapter 9, which we just had read to us. And this is an event, or this issue of repentance, should I say, is something which affects every single one of us in this tent tonight. You may have heard the story of a couple as they were getting older.

The husband became convinced that his wife was losing her hearing. And he pointed this out to her. She was convinced she wasn't.

And it became quite a sensitive subject between them. So, he didn't talk about it very much. But one day he decided to do an experiment.

She was sitting in the lounge, just quietly reading. He went into the kitchen, the next room. And from the kitchen he said, Would you like a cup of tea, dear? And there was no response, which is what he expected.

He went out into the passageway between the two rooms. And he said again, Would you like a cup of tea, dear? And again, there was no response. He went into the room where she was seated, stood right behind her chair.

As far as he knew, she didn't know he was there. And he said for the third time, Would you like a cup of tea, dear? And she said, For the third time, yes. It's always everybody else who has the problem, isn't it? You see, when we talk about repentance, as we're going to do tonight from this passage, we're not talking about something that is necessary for unbelievers in order to become Christians.

That is true, of course. But that isn't where repentance ceases. If you read the letters of Jesus to the seven churches in Asia in the first three chapters of the book of Revelation, to five of those seven churches, he said your need is to repent.

My prayer is that throughout this tent tonight, many of us who may have been Christians for years may rediscover again what it means to repent. Well, let's define the word, first of all, so we all know what we're talking about. I'm going to ask you a question.

And in a moment, I'm going to ask you to raise your hands in response. In response to this question, the question is, is repentance something we feel? Or is repentance something we think? Or is repentance something we do? Now, in a moment, I'm going to ask you to raise your hand for one of those three definitions. One is correct.

Is repentance something you feel, something you think, or something you do? There will be some smart ones amongst you who will say it involves all three. And you're probably right. But that isn't the answer I

want.

If repentance is something you feel, would you please put your hand up? OK, there's a few of you. It's not many. There's a few of you.

OK, thank you. Put your hand down. If repentance is something you think, would you please put your hand up? OK, again, just one or two, even less.

If repentance is something you do, would you please put your hand up? OK, that's the vast majority. I thought maybe you weren't playing for a moment. That's the vast majority.

I asked that question because I thought that you might get it wrong, and you did. Repentance is something you think. The New Testament Greek word is the word meta noia, meta, to change, noia, nous, the mind.

If repentance was simply something we do, we'll simply live legalistically. Now, it's true, and this is why you all put your hand up. John the Baptist did say, produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

But the producing of the fruit is not the repentance. It's only the consequence of the repentance. There are many, many folks who have felt badly about their sin.

I have sat with people who have wept about their sin, but they have not changed their mind about their sin. And I want to talk to you tonight about this because repentance is essentially changing your mind about three things. And we're going to look at this prayer of Daniel and see these three things in this prayer of Daniel.

First of all, changing our minds about God. Secondly, changing our minds about ourselves. Getting a realistic, biblical understanding of ourselves.

And thirdly, changing our mind about sin. In other words, true repentance is conforming our minds to truth about God, about ourselves, and about our sin. Repentance is actually thinking correctly.

And it is an ongoing process. That's why in the book of Romans, Paul says, be transformed. By what? By the renewal of your mind.

We would love the fast track. Be transformed by the sizzle down your spine. Woo-hoo! Everything's different now.

Well, enjoy every sizzle you get down your spine, but leave it exactly as you are unless your mind is changed and conformed to truth as revealed to us in the Word of God. Now, let's just take a moment to set the setting so you don't go away and say we didn't mention Daniel. Although it's out of the prayer that I want to look in particular, but conveniently Daniel dates this prayer in the first year of Darius, son of Xerxes.

I practiced pronouncing that all afternoon. And that means this took place in the year six, sorry, the year five, where is it? Here, 538 BC. We know that.

If you're not sure who Darius is, he was the third king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, of course, was the founder of the Babylonian Empire and its greatest king. Then his son, Belshazzar, replaced him for a short time, and then Darius came to the throne.

Now, we know that Daniel was taken to Babylon as part of the Jewish exiles back in the third year of the reign Jehoiakim. He tells us that in the first verse of the book. If you know anything about that period of history, when the Babylonians invaded Judah, it took three invasions lasting 18 years, culminating in the final destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC, and on the first of those invasions, they took some of the key men, men of royal blood and noble stock back to Babylon, and Daniel was one of them.

That means that 67 years have passed since Daniel was taken as a captive to Babylon. That means Daniel is probably in his 80s at this stage, and for nearly 70 years, he's lived as a fish out of water, uprooted from his own home, the land he loved, because it was a land where God placed His people. The story of the Old Testament, you probably know, is bringing the right people in the right place, or keeping the right people in the right place for the right purpose.

Detach the right people from the right place, and the purpose is on hold. Put the right people in the wrong place, and little happens. Put the right people in the right place, but forget the purpose, and it goes on hold.

So, the story of the Old Testament is bringing from Abraham on the right people into the right place for the right purpose. And so, Daniel, for 70 years, has not become imbibed in Babylonian culture. He's had a homesickness to get back to where God wanted the people to be in order for his purposes to be fulfilled.

Now, we know some of the great things that took place, of course, through Daniel's time in Babylon. Not least, through Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar submitted himself to the God of Israel. Daniel chapter 4 was a tract distributed throughout the whole Babylonian empire, telling the story of Nebuchadnezzar's conversion.

We know the story of Daniel's being thrown into the lion's den, though that actually took place after this. You may know that the book of Daniel is structured in such a way the first six chapters are the chronological sequence of events, and then chapter 7 to 12 are prophecies and events taken out of those first six chapters. And Daniel, when he was thrown into the lion's den, was, of course, at least in his eighties, a very old man that hadn't taken place as yet.

That was later in the reign of Darius. But Daniel knew that God had already revealed purposes for Israel because it says in verse 2, I, Daniel, understood from the scriptures according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. God has already spoken through Jeremiah who was a contemporary of Daniel, so a little bit younger than Daniel probably.

And he had already died by this time. Sorry, a little bit older than Daniel, should I say. He had preceded Daniel.

And Daniel knew that God had spoken, said after seventy years I'm going to bring the people back. Well, it's sixty-seven years so far since Daniel arrived. He knows the time is coming near when God is going to intervene again, shake that part of the world again, this time to uproot his people and take them back home again.

But something had to happen first and Daniel knew this from his reading of the scriptures given to Jeremiah. The people need to get right with God. The Babylonian exile was not an accident.

It was God's chastisement designed to bring them to repentance in order that having come to repentance he might then bring them to restoration in the land once again. And therefore this prayer of Daniel's is a prayer which expresses his repentance and the repentance of the people in order to get right again with

God in order that his purposes once again might begin to be worked out and fulfilled in them and in their experience. And that's why we're looking at this and that is why it's relevant to every one of us here tonight.

There's nobody here tonight who's on the sideline as far as God is concerned. There's nobody who's simply an observer of God's work in the world as far as God is concerned. Every single one of us is designed to be caught up as part of the purpose of God working in our world.

But there are conditions to being effective in that regard. There has to become a change of thinking, repentance, regarding God himself, regarding ourselves and regarding our sin. Now let me look at these three areas in this prayer.

First of all, there's a change of mind about God. And I want to point out just a couple of things. There are a lot of things in this prayer.

The more I've studied this in recent weeks, you could preach for a week on this and not exhaust it. So I'm going to have to be selective and that's always difficult for me but I will be. First of all, there's an understanding in this prayer of the righteousness of God.

Let me point out to you several instances. Verse 7, Lord, you are righteous. Verse 14, the Lord our God is righteous in everything he does.

Verse 16, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and wrath. In some of these zones this morning, we were discussing the righteousness of God, what it is, what it means. Well, the righteousness of God essentially is his character, his moral character.

And what makes sin a reality is that it fails to conform to the moral character of God. Sin is defined for us in Romans chapter 3 in a very familiar verse as having come short of the glory of God. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

The glory of God, the word glory occurs with slight variation of meaning depending on its context in Scripture. But the glory of God is essentially the character of God. It's his moral character.

And sin by definition is coming short. The word sin, I understand, was originally used in archery. If you took an arrow and you fired it at a target and you missed the target, the word used was sin.

If you missed the target by half an inch, it was called sin. If you missed the target by half a foot, it was called sin. If you missed the target by half a yard, it was called sin.

If you missed the target by half a mile, it was called sin. If you shot in the opposite direction, it was called sin. I'll tell you why.

Sin is not a measurement of how bad we are. Sin is a measurement of how good we're not, if you understand the difference. If you miss a bus by a minute, you've missed it.

If you miss it by an hour, you've missed it. If you miss it by a day, where I live, there's one bus a day, so you can miss it by a day. They'll wait a few minutes, you're getting it tomorrow.

If you miss it, it doesn't matter by how far you miss it, you've missed it. You don't congratulate yourself on missing a bus by a minute, do you? That's fantastic, you missed it by a minute today. Well done.

Do you know something? God is not particularly concerned with how bad we are. He is primarily concerned with how good we're not. That we've missed a mark.

What is the mark? It's his character. Geraldine read for us some Colossians earlier tonight. Read that great verse about Jesus.

He is the image of the invisible God. When you think about that verse, that is not a statement about the deity of Jesus. It is a statement about his humanity.

I'll tell you why. That is exactly what God said about Adam. How did God create Adam? To be in his image.

Adam should be the image of the invisible God. Humanity was created to be a visible, physical expression of God. And sin is coming short.

Sin is failing to portray the truth about God in the way we live, in the way we act, in the way we behave. If you meet someone on the street and say to them, excuse me, did you know you're a sinner? They'll probably get upset with you and for good reason. On what grounds do you call them a sinner? On what grounds do we recognize sin? We cannot know what sin is until we know who God is.

That's why our job by the way is to preach Christ, not sin. You preach Christ. People become aware of their sin as on the day of Pentecost when Peter preached.

And when he finished preaching, all the people said, what should we do? Peter said, repent. The interesting thing is Peter hadn't told them they should do anything. Prior to that, he hadn't told them they could do anything.

But it so presented Christ to them. The result was he said, something's wrong. And that's why true repentance must begin with a recognition of who God is in his moral character.

You see earlier in Daniel chapter 5, Belshazzar had replaced his father Nebuchadnezzar and was having a banquet. You may know this story when suddenly onto the wall of the banqueting hall came a hand, a detached hand that wrote three words on the wall in Aramaic. He repeated that word, mani, mani, tekel, parsin.

And the word tekem meant this, you have been weighed in the scales and found wanting. What kind of scales does God weigh us in? He weighs us in scales that compare with himself. For the wonderful destiny of every human being is you are designed to be an exhibit of the character of God, his moral character, his beauty, his kindness, his love, his gentleness, his patience, his righteousness.

And so this prayer of Daniel begins with an understanding of the righteousness of God that sin is not simply that which inconveniences inconveniences me or messes up my life or causes unfortunate consequences and that is why I need to repent but that sin is a violation of the purpose which I was created. I was created to be an exhibition of God and the way I behave and live. Well, wonderfully and fortunately, in changing his mind about God in this prayer, he also acknowledges the mercy of God because in verse 9 it says there, the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving.

If we only understood the righteousness of God, we would only be left humbled and condemned. But we turn to that in a moment. We need to understand the mercy of God.

And the forgiveness of God which we'll see in just a few minutes. But the second thing in Daniel's prayer acknowledges a change of mind about ourselves. Let me just read some extracts in verse 5. We have sinned.

We have been wicked and have rebelled. Verse 6. We have not listened to your servants, the prophets. Verse 7. We are covered with shame.

Verse 8. We are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. Verse 9. We have rebelled against God. Verse 10.

We have not obeyed the Lord our God or kept the laws He gave us. Verse 11. We have sinned against you.

Verse 15. We have sinned. We have done wrong.

Verse 16. Our sins and the iniquities of our fathers have made Jerusalem logical scorn to those all around us. I just read those as an extract.

There are 32 times in this prayer that Daniel uses the first person plural. We, we, we, our. What's he doing? I'll tell you what he's doing.

It's the easiest thing in the world to say they, they, they. Or even you, you have sinned. But Daniel identifies with his people and he says we stand together.

Guilty before God. You see one of the favorite pastimes of the church is describing what's wrong with the world. Unfortunately.

But you see the problem is not out there at all. The Bible's very clear about that. The problem is in here.

The book of James chapter 4 verse 1. What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires to battle within you? I remember once going to a school and I was going to speak to a class of kids, a high school 14 years of age about, about they were. And I began this class by saying to them, none of you are responsible for the kind of world you're growing up in. That is the responsibility of the previous generations, your parents, your grandparents and those who've gone before.

Do you think they've done a good job? Do you like the kind of world you're growing up in? When you watch the news on television or read the newspapers or you listen to politicians, you say, yes, you people have really created a great world for us. You understand I loaded the question in such a way as to get the answer I wanted. They said, no.

We don't like the world. We don't like the way it is. I said, all right.

I'd like you to tell me what you think is wrong with the world. I've got a piece of chalk I'm going to write on the board. Whatever you tell me.

And they started off saying things like teachers, policemen, parents. I said, all right, I'm not going to write those down. The interesting thing is those are all people.

Nobody said, I know what's wrong with the world, dogs know what's wrong with the world, cats. You've said people. So you tell me, what do you think is wrong with people? And they began to talk some sense

and I forgot the order in which they came but suddenly put their hand up and they said, people are proud.

I said, what do you mean? Well, there's some people who think they're better than other people and they strut around as though they're more important. So that's a very good one. I'll write that down.

I wrote down the word pride. Somebody else said people are greedy. I said, what do you mean? Well, some people just want whatever they can get and there's not enough for everybody else.

Okay, that's a very good one. I wrote down the word greedy. Somebody else, somebody said people are selfish.

What do you mean? Well, they don't care about anybody else. They just care about me, me, me. That's all they really are interested in.

Okay, thank you. I'll write that down. The word selfish.

Somebody else said people are jealous. What do you mean? Well, they don't have what other people have. So they get jealous and they want to spoil it for those who've got it.

Okay, that's an interesting one. I'll write down the word jealousy. We went on, had a list.

I don't know, 15, 20 words. I said, all right, that's what is wrong with the world, is it? People are proud. People are greedy.

People are selfish. People are jealous. Is that what you think is wrong with the world? And they said, yes.

I said, okay, let's suppose in tonight instead of going home, you've got your school together in the school hall and you lock the doors and you got up in the front and said, listen, school, our world is in a mess. People are proud. People are selfish.

People are greedy. People are jealous. Let's see if we can work out how to put our world right.

And supposing you stayed up all night trying to put the world right. Do you think by tomorrow morning you might discover in your school somebody is a little bit proud. Somebody's greedy.

There's somebody who's selfish. There's somebody who gets jealous. Do you think you'd find that in this school? And they answered pretty quickly, yes.

And began to give me some names. I said, don't give me any names. But five minutes ago, you told me that's what's wrong with the world.

Now you're telling me this is what's wrong with your school. So suppose you didn't do that. Suppose you went home, got your family together, your mum, your dad, your brothers, your sisters, your granny.

You locked the doors. You said, hey family, the world's in a mess and our school's in the same mess. People are selfish.

They're proud. They're jealous. They're greedy.

Let's see if we can put the world right. And just supposing you stayed up all night trying to put the world right. Do you think by tomorrow morning you might discover in your family somebody's a little proud, a little

greedy sometimes, occasionally selfish.

Somebody gets jealous. Do you think you'd find that in your family? And they were slower to answer. And then somebody said, yes, granny.

I said, leave granny out of this. Somebody said, my sister. Leave your sister out.

What you're saying is this is what's wrong with your family, isn't it? I said, 10 minutes ago, you told me this was wrong with the world. Five minutes ago, you said that's what's wrong with my school. Now you're saying, this is what's wrong with my family.

So supposing you didn't go home tonight. You went down the road and climbed the tree and sat up the tree all night saying to yourself, the world's in a mess. My school's in the same mess.

My family's in the same mess. People are proud. People are selfish.

People are greedy. People are jealous. What can I do to put the world right? Supposing you stayed there all night and tomorrow morning, do you think you might discover that you might be a little bit proud, occasionally selfish.

Once in a while, you get jealous. Very occasionally, you're greedy. Do you think that would be true for you? They were silent.

So I pointed to one boy who'd been more vocal earlier and I said, what about you? He said, me? And I said, yes, you. And everybody else said, yeah, him. I said, no, no, everybody else, quiet.

What about you? He said, I don't know. I said, excuse me, you do know. Are you ever proud? Ever selfish? Ever greedy? Do you ever get jealous? He said, I suppose so.

I said, don't suppose so. Tell me, yes or no. Is that true of you? He said, yes.

I said, thank you. What about you? Yes. What about you? Yes.

What about you? Yes. What about you? Yes. I said, this is interesting.

You told me 20 minutes ago, this is what's wrong with the world. Then you told me, this is what's wrong with the family. Now you're telling me, this is what's wrong with you.

So what is wrong with the world? I'll tell you. You are. Do you know, it's a fantastic discovery when you realize that.

My biggest problem in life is me, actually. Don't kid yourself. Husbands, stop blaming your wives, will you? Did somebody clap then? Where did that come from? Okay, wives, stop blaming your kids.

Kids, stop blaming your parents. Daniel stands before God and says, God, we, that includes me. Do you remember Isaiah? In another session yesterday, I mentioned this.

In Isaiah chapter 5, Isaiah was a good preacher. And in chapter 5, he gives a whole catalog of woes about the people. Woe to those who draw sin along with cords of deceit.

Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes. Woe to those who are called evil, good and good evil. Woe to those who are here as a drinking wife, and so on.

And you and I would listen and read that chapter and say, Isaiah, you're right on. I agree with you. But then in Isaiah chapter 6, something happened.

Do you know what happened? Isaiah went into the temple, had a vision of God. And do you know what he said? Woe is me. And do you know what happened then? It says, Then I heard the word of the Lord.

At last, Isaiah got God's attention when he stopped saying, Woe to those and woe to those and woe to the others. And he said, Woe is me. I'm a man of unclean lips.

And I dwell among a people of unclean lips. It's true the rest of the world and the rest of the nations are in the same boat, but he begins with himself. We've heard before, judgment begins in the house of God.

But I'll tell you this, repentance begins in the recognition of your own personal standing before God and the corruption of our own hearts. Because you see, the basic problem that we have, every single one of us, is our own heart. That's why temptation is a problem.

Everybody in this place, isn't it? I mean, who struggles with temptation in this place? Just put your hand up. That looks like everybody. Do you know why? Because if you could get away with it, you'd love to do all those things.

That's why it's a problem, isn't it? I mean, temptation by definition is attractive. Otherwise, it isn't a temptation, by definition. For example, I'm never tempted to walk in front of a moving bus.

It's not attractive to me. I am tempted to push somebody else in front of a moving bus, sometimes, depending who it is. By definition, the only reason I struggle with temptation is this.

If I could get away with it, if God didn't mind, if nobody else knew, if there were no consequences, you wouldn't believe the kind of sin I would commit. Except it's like the kind of sin you would commit probably. Because you see, the heart of man is desperately corrupt, desperately wicked.

The scripture's clear on that diagnosis. Now, let's stop blaming everybody else for this. If the devil died tonight, you would still sin tomorrow.

Because sin comes from within. Each one is tempted, James 1, 14 says, when by his own desire he's dragged away and enticed. A colleague of mine was speaking in the south of England one day at a church.

A lady came to talk to him at the end of the meeting. She said, would you please pray for me? He said, certainly. What is your need? He said, she said, I'm troubled with demons.

He said, tell me more. She said, I have a demon of greed, and a demon of pride, and a demon of lies, and a demon of envy, and a demon of lust, and a demon of this, and a demon of that. She gave a whole catalog of demons.

My friend said, well, you mean to tell me you have a demon of pride, and a demon of greed, and a demon of lust, and a demon of envy, and a demon of this, and a demon of that? She said, yes. He said, that's incredible. She said, why? He said, I can do all those things all by myself.

He said, I don't have a single demon. I struggle with every one of those things. Madam, he said, your need is not exorcism.

Your need is repentance. Now, I'm not denying, of course, the reality of demonic involvement. That would be foolish, because that is a reality.

But one of the leaders of that church told me about that. He said, you know, she went to every visiting speaker, and nearly all of them played her game. He was the only one who took sense to her, and said, Madam, you are the problem.

And repentance, recognizing I stand before God, corrupt, because the heart of man is desperately wicked. We change our mind about ourselves, that means we stop depending on our own resources, stop depending on human resources. God does not forgive us of our sin, and then say, now you're clean.

Try and live a little bit better if you possibly can. That would be impossible. But the whole point of the Christian life is having faced our sin.

We turn from ourselves in order that the Spirit of Jesus Christ might replace all that we are with all that he is. So, it's no longer I who live, as Paul says in Galatians, but Christ who lives in me, as Hudson Taylor, that famous missionary statesman of a century ago, said the secret of a changed life is in discovering it's an exchanged life. It's not simply Christ changing me, it's Christ replacing me by placing his Holy Spirit in me to live the life of Jesus in me.

And that's supernatural. But that's the only hope. We recognize it's not what I do for Jesus, it's what I let Jesus by his Holy Spirit do in me, and for me, and through me.

It's supernatural. But thirdly, and lastly, briefly, there's a change of mind about sin. Two things, firstly, that come across in this prayer of Daniels in verse 8. He says, we have sinned against you.

First sin is primarily against God. We won't say any more about that. But it's important we understand that.

It's not just that sin messes up our lives. It does mess up our lives. That is not the basis of its seriousness.

But it offends against the purposes which God created us. It robs us of the dignity we're intended to have when we're created to express his likeness and image. But secondly, and so importantly, verse 16, he says, turn away your anger and your wrath.

Sin may be forgiven. We know it's at great cost because Jesus Christ as our substitute bore the just requirement of our sin. But as a result, forgiveness is available.

You know, forgiveness is one of the greatest, one of the deepest needs of the human heart. I was driving my car down the motorway one day, and I was listening to an interview on the radio with the head of a psychiatric institution in Scotland. And he said something caused me to pull off the road and write it down before I forgot it.

This is what he said. He said, if my patients could be assured of forgiveness, half of them could go home tomorrow. His assessment was that half of those in his care whose lives had broken down had at its basis a sense of guilt that had never been resolved.

And the marvelous thing is that on the basis of the death of the Lord Jesus, that satisfied the justice of God, so God forgives us, by the way, and on the basis of mercy, on the basis of justice, if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just. He is just to forgive us because Christ has paid for us. It's just for God to forgive us because Christ has already paid for our sin.

Marvelous, that. And we come in genuine repentance. And there's Psalm 103 says, as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Interesting, David said, as far as the east is from the west, not as far as the north is from the south. You see, the north is a fixed point, the south is a fixed point. If you go north, you'll travel over the North Pole, begin to go south whilst going in a straight line.

But if you go west, you'll never go east. You'll begin to go right around the world. If you go east, you'll never go west.

It's infinity. God takes our sin and moves it as far as the east is from the west. Says Nazar 43, your sins and your iniquities, I will remember no more.

Fantastic ability God has, not to forget, but to never ever recall, never recall. I wish we believed. I talked to so many people who I wish believed that.

I heard about two brothers one day who were fighting, fighting all day. And when they came to go to bed at night, the mother said, Lear of the two brothers, you've been fighting your brother all day today. Why don't you just forgive him before you go to bed? He said, I'm not going to forgive him.

It's his fault. He hit me first. The mother tried to appeal to his sentiment a little bit and said, Just suppose that during the night your brother died.

Wouldn't you be sorry in the morning if you hadn't forgiven him? And the boy thought for a moment and said, All right, all right, I'll forgive him. But if he's alive in the morning. Sometimes we have that fear, don't we? Do you know what the scripture says? There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

I'll tell you this. If you're a Christian tonight and you feel condemned, it has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit. It has only to do with the devil whose ministry includes being the accuser of the brethren.

Satan condemns, God convicts, and there's a difference. Condemnation is like a wet blanket that sits on you. There's no way out.

Conviction makes us aware of our sin. That is always the ministry of the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, but he always makes us aware of the way out through the cross of Christ. Forgiveness and cleansing.

And you can go out of this place tonight and know you're clean. The only way sin ever leaves your body, by the way, is through your mouth. We confess our sin.

That doesn't mean you have to remember every detail, but you confess, as Daniel does, we are sinners before a holy God. I have violated his righteousness. I've lived by my own resources and can only but then end up in corruption.

I have sinned. I changed my mind about God. I allow him now to impart his righteousness to me.

I changed my mind about myself. It's no longer I who live, but it's Christ who lives in me. My dependency now is exclusively on him, his power, his working, his righteousness, his holiness.

That's how I'm now recognized from heaven, closed with his righteousness. I changed my mind about sin. I declare war on it and I confess it.

And I finish quickly. Verse 23. As soon as you began to pray, the angel Gabriel now comes on the scene.

As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given. The answer was this. You can read it there.

There'll be an end to your sin. There will be atonement for your wickedness. There will come everlasting righteousness.

And the anointed one, the ruler, is going to come. Speaking of Jesus. We turn from ourselves and our sin to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and all his utter sufficiency.

Do you need to come in repentance tonight? Maybe some of you for yourself. You know there are things in your life you need, you need to repent and deal with them. Maybe you need to lead your family in repentance.

How do you talk as a family about the neighbors next door? You need to say, we have sinned. Some of you need to go home maybe and lead your church in repentance. What has been your attitude to those around you? It's not just me.

It's we, our sin, our iniquity. Let's pray together. Father God, you know every man and woman and young person in this tent tonight.

Nothing about us surprises you and certainly nothing about us shocks you. You know everything there is to know about us. And in your deep, deep, deep love, you convict us of our sin, not to humiliate us, not to rub our nose in our own dirt, but in order to cleanse us.

And remake us again in the image in which we were first created. You restore righteousness. You put the life of God back into human experience by placing your Holy Spirit within us.

And I pray, Lord Jesus, many of us will come in a fresh way and know again what it means to be clean and therefore to be equipped for the Spirit of God to look through us. For whatever your purposes are, in Jesus' name, Amen.

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