

Down on Your Knees

by Denis Lyle

Daniel's prayer in the Book of Daniel is a powerful example of the importance of prayer and recognition of God's sovereignty and faithfulness.

Scripture: Psalm 111:9, Jeremiah 29:10, Daniel 9:3, Matthew 7:7, Acts 6:4, Romans 10:1, James 1:6, 1 John 5:14, Revelation 22:20

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Prophecy"

Description

Denis Lyle preaches on the importance of prayer and prophecy, using Daniel 9 as a focal point. The chapter showcases Daniel's prayer and the subsequent prophecy, emphasizing the significance of seeking God in prayer amidst historical and personal contexts. Daniel's prayer life, characterized by moments of international and chronological significance, highlights the value of corporate and private prayer, as well as appropriate prayer aligned with God's Word. The sermon delves into the motives, manner, and matter of Daniel's prayer, emphasizing attributes of God, confession of sin, and requests in alignment with God's will.

Transcript

Reading: Daniel 9:1-19

DOWN ON OUR KNEES

A pastor once commented that he did not preach on prophecy because "prophecy distracts people from the present". One of his professors observed "Well, there is certainly a lot of distraction then in the Scriptures". It has been well stated that prophecy is not escapism or distraction from the present. Rather it is for the Christian the motivation for the present. Now we see in this very chapter how true this was Daniel.

Daniel (Ch 9) has been called by one writer, "the backbone of prophecy", and by another "the high point of the Book of Daniel". As (Ch 2) and (Ch 7) outline the prophetic programme of the Gentile nations, so (Ch 9) reveals Gods prophetic programme for the Jews. In fact, this chapter answers the very timely question, "Will Israel survive" Now this wonderful chapter has got a double theme. From (9:1-19) you have got THE PRAYER and then from (9:20-27) you have got THE PROPHECY. In order to see the Prophecy in its correct setting we need to take time and look at the Prayer. So the title for our subject this...

" DOWN ON OUR KNEES". Now there are three significant ninth chapters in the Old Testament, all of them containing a prayer of similar nature. There is Ezra (Ch 9) and then Nehemiah (Ch 9) and then Daniel (Ch 9) and in each instance a servant of God was on his knees before the Word of God, earnestly interceding for the people of God. Now its Daniel that we are interested in this... and there are five things I want to underscore about his prayer.

(1) THE MOMENT OF THE PRAYER

Did you notice the opening phrase "In the first year."

(1:1) That is the time or moment of this prayer. Now I want you to see this time in its:

(a) INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT:

Look at (1:1) So you can see right away that the Babylonian Empire has fallen, just as Daniel predicted in the vision of the multimetallic statue, and that the Medo-Persians have taken control of the Chaldean Empire. So Medo-Persia has donned the mantle of global supremacy and this was a dual kingship for while Cyrus was the King of the Empire (6:28) Darius ruled Babylon and the area connected with it. (6:6)

(b) CHRONOLOGICAL CONTEXT:

Its the "first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus."

(1:1) The year is 538 BC, just about the time when Daniel was cast into the lions den. Do you recall that I said that the deportation of Judah to Babylon took place in three stages.

The first deportation took place in 605 BC when Daniel and his three friends were taken. The second invasion was in 597 BC when a much larger number of people were taken. The third and final invasion was in 586 BC when the temple was destroyed and the city was burned. (2 Kings 24:6-16) So Daniel was taken in 605 BC, it was now 538 BC so that the difference between the two dates is approximately 67 years. So that Daniel is living on the very threshold of Jeremiah's prophecy that after 70 years God would visit his people and restore them to their own land. (Jer 29:10) Now remember that the chapters in the Book of Daniel are not in chronological order.

Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, bring before us the days of Nebuchadnezzar. Then Chapter 7 comes next "In the first year of Belshazzar". Then Chapter 8 "In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar". Then Chapter 5, the last year of the reign of Belshazzar. Then Chapter 9, "In the first year of Darius", then Chapter 6 Daniel in the den of lions, then Chapters 10, 11, and 12. So you have to handle these chapters carefully to see exactly where events are fitting in. They are presented in our Bible very simply, the first six chapters are historical and the last six chapters are prophetic.

Now that is the (1) Medo-Persia has taken over and its the first year of Darius, and the date is 538 BC. (2) THE MAN OF THE PRAYER You see, too many believers prayer is a matter of little importance, but to those who have a hold of God it is recognised as a matter of supreme importance. It was George Mueller who said, "I live in the spirit of prayer. I pray as I walk, when I lie down and when I arise. The answers are always coming. Thousands and ten thousands of times have my prayers been answered".

Now Daniel, like Mueller was a man of prayer. Daniel believed in the: (a) VALUE OF CORPORATE PRAYER: Do you recall the crisis in (Ch 2:14-19) Here are the wise men of Babylon exploring every

possibility of this world's wisdom to meet the Kings demand and here are four young men going straight to heaven resolutely turning their backs upon anything to do with earth and going straight to the throne room of grace. Is that your policy When you have an insoluble problem on earth do you go to heaven about it Well, Daniel formed this little prayer group and I would love to have been at that prayer meeting.

I'm sure Hananiah didn't come to Daniel and say, "Daniel don't call on me to pray tonight I don't feel led to pray". And Mishael and Azariah did not remain dumb and did not allow long gaps in the prayer meeting. They didn't say, "Daniel, please forgive me if I don't pray tonight". Daniel might have said, "If you don't lift up your voice, you might not have a voice to lift up by the end of the night". My, how can you sit quiet in the prayer meeting Brethren, you who should be taking the lead how can you sit dumb in the prayer meeting My, if we were in a bit more of a desperate position it might revolutionise the prayer meetings.

Now tell me do you believe in the value of Corporate Prayer Are you here when the church gathers together for prayer (b) VALUE OF PRIVATE PRAYER: Do you recall the crisis in (Ch 6) Look at (6:10) Robert Murray McCheyne that saintly Scottish Presbyterian minister said this, "What a man is on his knees before God, that he is and no more". Mary Queen of Scots once said, "I fear John Knox's prayers more than an army of ten thousand men". Daniel's holy habit was like that of the psalmist, "Evening and morning and noon will I pray and cry aloud and he shall hear my voice". (Ps 55:17) My, for Daniel prayer was not supplemental it was fundamental, a priority in his life.

As a believer do you pray Do you pray regularly How long has it been since you talked with the Lord (c) VALUE OF APPROPRIATE PRAYER: For is this passage not a wonderful model of how the people of God should approach the throne of grace How we should pray appropriately Daniel, was a man of prayer! This is amazing when you think of: 1. DANIEL'S AGE: For if the "first year of Darius", (9:1) is 538 BC and Daniel went into captivity as a teenager in 605 BC you can reckon that he is about 85 years of age and he's still storming the throne of grace.

What about you older ones Older folk often say, "God has left me here for a purpose". How true that is But do you know what that purpose is Why do you think God has left you here To dander in the park! Not a bit of it. My, you are here for business. The business of seeking His face. Like Daniel in old age, are you still turning your face heavenward 2. DANIEL POSITION: For according to (Ch 6) he's Prime Minister in Babylon. His life must have been filled with the affairs of state from morning till night.

My, no man had a more valid excuse for not giving much time to prayer and yet Daniel prayed three times a day! How is it that we can get God's people out to everything and anything but we can't get them out to pray Ask them to join a church committee and they would not miss it! Ask them to socialise, to play golf, to kick football... they are full of enthusiasm, ask them to come and pray and they are conspicuous by their absence. (1) (2) (3) THE MOTIVE OF THE PRAYER What was it that motivated Daniel "to set his face unto the Lord God". (9:2) Well, have a look, there was: (a) THE DILIGENT SEARCHING OF THE WORD: You see, when Daniel went into captivity with the rest of the Jews, he didn't have a copy of the Bible like we have today.

He had some portions of the Old Testament, some of which were the writings of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was around in the time just before the captivity of the people of Judah. His ministry was not a pleasant ministry. It was not a popular ministry, and it was not widely accepted. But one day when Daniel was having his personal devotions in the Book of Jeremiah, something jumped off the page that motivated him to pray this great prayer. We weren't there to look over Daniel's shoulder, but look at some of the words that Daniel

must have been studying. (Jer 25:8-11) Now Daniel had lived through almost seventy years of the captivity.

He saw the captivity take the life out of their Jewish culture and history. But that wasn't part of the prophecy that caught his attention. His eyes, still sharp in spite of his years must have searched the words on the scrolls until he came to this passage. (Jer 29:10) My, would that not have grabbed his heart Daniel knows that the captivity has lasted nearly 70 years. He realises that the promise of God for deliverance must be forthcoming. It was getting close. It was almost time for God to take the Jews back to their own land. (a) Tell me: has your prayer life got into a rut Then what about your Bible reading For the two stand or fall together. (Acts 6:4) There's another lesson here that we don't want to miss in a charismatic climate such is ours.

Its this. God does not gave His people dreams and visions when He can teach them through His Word. For us to day, the Holy Spirit teaches us through the Word of God. There is no direct revelation or vision to day. My, the Scriptures contain all that God has been pleased to reveal of His ways and purposes. Beware of "new revelations", that are supposed to come from "dreams and visions", and occupy yourself like Daniel with (a) But notice this led: (b) THE DELIBERATE SEEKING OF THE LORD: Look at (9:3) When Daniel reads God's Word, he is moved to respond in prayer.

My, do you know what prayer is Prayer is my response to Gods Word. Eugene Patterson, in a book on pastoral ministry, describes prayer this way: "Prayer is never the first word. It is always the second word. God has the first word. Prayer is answering speech. It is response". Prayer does not begin with me jumping in and talking to God. Prayer begins with what God has already said in His Word. It becomes my response to God. How do we learn to talk By listening to other people talk How do we learn to talk to God By listening to God as He talks to us and then imitating His speech.

Now here is Daniel living within the imminent fulfilment of Israels' restoration to the land after 70 years, and rather than hinder Daniel this prophetic truth helped Daniel. Indeed it drove him to his knees in a ministry of intercession for his people. Some years ago a Bible College student met with his fellow-students for a prayer meeting in the dormitory. Though he had memorised a great many Scriptures he seemed to have difficulty retaining them. As this student prayed he started to quote of God's promises because he wanted to claim it for his own.

But soon he began to stammer and stumble forgetting the verse halfway through. Finally he said, "Just a minute Lord", he went over to his desk turned to the reference in his Bible and said, "here it is Lord right here". Do you know what it is to claim Gods promises To cry, "Lord do as you have said" This is exactly what Daniel did. Do you see: 1. THE SINCERITY HERE: " I set my face... "or "I turned my face to the Lord God". Prayer is bit like a golf. In golf you have to put all distractions out of your kind and keep your eye on the ball.

My, the same is true with prayer. You must put all distractions out of your mind and keep your eye on God. 2. THE INTENSITY HERE: " By prayer and supplications... "(9:2) This was no namby-pamby prayer, but a passionate prayer. Do we have any idea what it means to be fervent in prayer 3. THE REALITY HERE: " With fasting... "(9:2) This is a time in our lives when we say to no to our physical wants and desires and prioritise the spiritual realm. (Mk 9:29) 4. THE HUMILITY HERE: " And sackcloth and ashes...

"(9:2) Sackcloth was a coarse, uncomfortable garment, ashes were put on the head as a sign of grief, since Daniel grieved over his nations sins. Yes, Daniel read the prophetic Word and was moved to pray.

My, what does the study of Biblical prophecy do for you What has the study of this book done for you For some it merely arouses their curiosity, for others it increases their Bible knowledge. For few it motivates them to godly living. Daniel was thrilled with this prophecy, but it brought him "Down on his knees".

Does the study of prophecy do that for you Does it stir you to pray more Does it move you to the throne of grace When Daniel reads Gods Word he is moved to respond in prayer, look at: (4) THE MANNER OF THE PRAYER For as we see Daniel engaged in prayer we notice that there is in his prayer: (a) A REPRESENTATIVE SPIRIT: Look at (9:20) Daniel does not pray AT his people, now there are some believers who do that, they want to get a message to you, so they pray at you. But not Daniel.

He didn't point a finger and say, "Look, Lord, my people have really been wicked and whatever you have done to them, they deserve it". No, he identified himself with the sin of his people and admitted to God that His judgement upon Israel for 70 years was just. Look at what he say in (9:5, 6, 7, 8, 9) You see, the Old Testament prophets always identified themselves with the sins of their people. In the New Testament especially in 1 Corinthians, we learn that as believers we are one body.

When one hurts, we all hurt, when one rejoices we all rejoice, when one sins it affects us all. (Rom 14:7) My, there is not anything that you are capable of doing that I am not capable of doing. We are in this together and not one of us can sin without affecting the other. Someone has said that the meaning of the church steeple is this. It teaches us that the closer you get to God, the smaller you are. That is the reason why Daniel calls out to God in confession of sin, not because he was such a great sinner, but because he was walking with God in such close fellowship that even the incidental sins in his own life were magnified in his mind.

Notice also there was: (b) A REPENTANT SPIRIT: If you are married, often the hardest words to say are, "Dear, I was wrong". For example when you are driving down the motorway in a strange country, and she tells you that you should have come off at junction 10 and you say, "I know where I'm going that's not the way". All of a sudden you realise in your heart that you should have come off. Do you know how far a man will drive to keep his wife from knowing that she was right and he was wrong Its not easy to pull over to the side of the road and say "Dear, I was wrong".

Sometimes we find it hard to come to the Lord and say, "Lord I was wrong and I confess my sin". In the New Testament the word "confession", means to admit our guilt. When we confess our sins we verbalise our spiritual shortcomings. Is that not exactly what Daniel did My, what a prayer this is. A prayer that is punctuated with: A CONSCIOUSNESS of sin: A CONVICTION for sin: A CONFESSION of sin: A CONTRITION for sin: A spirit of repentance. Is that not what we need to recapture in these days We attend countless prayer meetings, but when was the last time, you heard one word about being broken in heart over sin My, here is Daniel at prayer, approaching the God of Heaven.

How do you approach God Do you have: (c) A REVERENTIAL SPIRIT: Do you see how he begins "O Lord... "Time and again in his prayer he speaks reverently of God. (9:7, 9, 16, 18,) Is that not another element missing in our prayers today A.W. Pink says, "We scarcely recognise Him, He seems to have lost His identity". How do you approach the Lord Do you recognise Him as the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, or do you treat Him as some kind of cosmic chum Sure, grace admits us to the throne of grace, but lets never forget its still a throne on which sits the Lord of Glory!

Hence, we need to approach the Lord with reverence and awe. (d) A RESOLUTE SPIRIT: He is unwavering in this one point. He wants God to answer. Look at (9:19) Daniel's mind, instructed by the

Word of God is made up. He wants God to fulfil His promises, to honour His Word, he is asking in faith nothing wavering. (James 1:6) When it comes to prayer, have you got a resolute spirit E. M. Bounds in his book "POWER THROUGH PRAYER", says this, " Our praying needs to be pressed and pursued with an energy that never tires, a persistency that will not be denied, and a courage which never fails."

So much of our praying is like the little boy that rings the doorbell, but runs away before the door is opened. But the Lord Jesus said, "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you". (Matt 7:7) The tense indicates, that we are to ask and go on asking: seek and go on seeking: knock and go on knocking. This is how Daniel prayed, what about you How do we pray Most of our prayers are so self-centred that we have no time to be God-centred!

Yet prayer begins with the recognition that our God is a great God, for have a look at: (5) THE MATTER OF THE PRAYER The content or the substance of Daniel's prayer. You see, if you look closely at this prayer, you will observe that there are three distinct parts to it. It begins with: (a) THE RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL'S GOD: For throughout his prayer, Daniel is recognising God. Look he recognises: 1. THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD: The lovely perfection's of God, he refers frequently to them in his prayer.

My, do you see the God Daniel gets his eyes on. Look at: * The GREATNESS of our God: (9:4) My, prayer is recognising the greatness of God. * The DREADFULNESS of our God: (9:4) " Dreadful, "is the word rendered "reverent", in the book of Psalms. "Holy and reverend is His name". (Ps 111:9) The idea is that at all times we should have the reverence that God demands. * The FAITHFULNESS of our God: (9:4) Daniel did not know exactly how God would restore His people to their land but he believed he would. * The RIGHTEOUSNESS of our God: in (9:7) * The FORGIVENESS of our God: in (9:9) Daniel is bowing low before God and with every fibre of his being he's gripping the throne and he's getting his eyes on the Lord.

My, what a God Daniel had. What a God we have. For in the gospel of John we read, "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him". (Jn 1:18) Do we not see in the Gospels: * The GREATNESS of the Saviour: Gispay Smith was once asked if the Communist world took away all his Bible and left him with one chapter what would it be He replied (Mk Ch 5) because at the beginning of the chapter you see Christ's power over Demons: in the middle of the chapter you see Christ's power over Disease: at the end of the chapter you see Christ's power over Death.

Gispay Smith said, "A Saviour who can save men and women from Demons: Disease: and Death must be a Great Saviour! * The DREADFULNESS of the Saviour: For when He goes into the temple and drives them out it becomes a dreadful place. * The RIGHTEOUSNESS of the Saviour: For did not lay a righteous foundation whereby: * The FORGIVENESS of the Saviour: might be experienced by sinners. My, are you ever taken with the attributes of your God Daniel recognises 1. 2. THE ACTIVITIES OF GOD: For he looks back at Israel's history and see's God's hand controlling the events that befell his people.

God brought Israel out of Egypt (9:15) God gave Israel His laws and statutes: (9:11) God sent His prophets to Israel: (9:6) God poured out His anger against Jerusalem: (9:7) God fulfilled His threatenings of punishment: (9:12) My, when Daniel got his eyes on the Attributes and the Activities of God what confidence it gave him as he approached God in prayer! Do you know something The Scope of our prayers will be limited only to the Size of the God we have. My, we have a Great God.

" Thou art coming to a King Large petitions with thee bring For His grace and power are such None can ever ask too much." (b) THE RECITAL OF ISRAEL'S SIN: Do you see how DESCRIPTIVE sin is Did you

notice the different words that Daniel uses for sin He talks about "sinned", "iniquity", "wicked", "rebelled", "trespass", (9:5-7) Daniel says, "Lord we have missed the mark. We have been passionate in our rebellion against you. We have rejected authority. We have disobeyed your commandments.

"Do you ever hear anyone praying in the prayer meeting like that Do you see how INCLUSIVE sin (9:7-8) They are all in it: Do you see how EFFECTIVE sin What was the effects of Israels sin Captivity (9:7) Confusion (9:8) Curse (9:11) Calamity (9:12) What aggravated it was, they did learn from what had happened to them. Look at (9:13) Are we better than Israel For the last 30 years hundreds in our land have been blasted into eternity. But are we the better for it Does the state of the land, the churches burden us What will have to happen to get us on our knees before God (a) (b) (c) THE REQUEST OF ISRAELS PROPHET: Daniel is praying in the will of God when he says (9:19) He's simply saying, "Lord in keeping with Jeremiahs prophecy bring this 70 year captivity to an end". (1 Jn 5:14-15) " DOWN ON OUR KNEES", Are you ever there Are you there often My, is this not where prophecy should drive us To prayer!

Has God revealed to us that He will establish His kingdom on earth, then we should be praying, "thy kingdom come". (Matt 6:10) Has God revealed to us that the Lord Jesus will return for His church, then we should praying "even so come, Lord Jesus". (Rev 22:20) Has God told us that only those who are in Christ will be "caught up to meet the Lord in the air", then we should be praying "my hearts desire and prayer to God for Mary is that she might be saved". (Rom 10:1) DOWN ON OUR KNEES! May we be found often there!

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