

Pray like Daniel Session 2

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[0 : 00] All right, good morning, and wow, what a great breakfast we had this morning. And all the hard work that's been done to prepare for and to also serve us while we're here, just express my gratitude for all the work that's gone into the retreat.

And I'm enjoying getting to know some of you guys and look forward to more opportunity to fellowship with you, get to know you. And it's a blessing to be here in your church, to learn about your fellowship.

I know Chad, I've gotten to know Chad well over the last few years through our connections with RBNNet, but this is the first time I've been here to your church. And so it's really a great joy to be here and also to meet folks from other churches that are here as well.

I know there's a lot here from media, Pennsylvania, and it's been great to meet you guys. And thank you for your prayers. I feel a little bit better this morning.

Last night, the pressure was really bad in my head, and that's pretty much gone. I still have a lot of the remnants inside my chest and head, but I feel a whole lot better.

[1 : 17] So I appreciate your prayers for me. All right, let's turn to the book of Daniel. Daniel, we'll pick up where we left off last night.

I had a really nice introduction to my sermon, and I'm going to skip my introduction for the sake of time so we don't go too long, and we're going to cut to the chase in picking up where we left off.

As we return to Daniel chapter 9 this morning, I remind you that this passage, in it we have an account of Daniel's prayer on a particular occasion.

It's one of the great prayers of the Bible. We already see earlier in the book of Daniel that Daniel was a man of prayer. We learned that in chapter 2. We see that especially in chapter 6.

But here, we're actually taken into Daniel's prayer closet, as it were, to hear him praying, and his prayer has to do with the deliverance of God's people from Babylonian captivity.

[2 : 17] So we not only learn to pray in general in this prayer, we do learn about that. We learn a lot about that. But we also learn how to pray for the revival of the church of Christ in times of spiritual declension and desolation.

How to pray for God to deliver and to revive and to restore his people. So may God help us as we consider Daniel's prayer to learn how to pray like Daniel did.

And so let me read to us again, picking up with Daniel chapter 9, verse 1, read down to verse 19, if you want to follow with me. It's quite a long section, but we'll read all of it here.

In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans, in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood by the books, the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah, the prophet, that he would accomplish 70 years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make requests by prayer and supplications with fasting sackcloth and ashes. And I prayed to the Lord, my God, and made confession and said, Oh, Lord, great and awesome God who keeps covenant and mercy with those who love him and those who keep his commandments.

[3 : 39] We have sinned and committed iniquity. We have done wickedly and rebelled even by departing from your precepts and your judgments. Neither have we heeded your servants, the prophets who spoke in your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land.

O Lord, righteousness belongs to you, but to us shame a face as it is this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which you have driven them because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against you.

O Lord, to us belongs shame a face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against you. To the Lord, our God, belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him.

We have not obeyed the voice of the Lord, our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants, the prophets. Yes, all Israel has transgressed your law and has departed so as not to obey your voice.

Therefore, the curse and the oath written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, has been poured out upon us because we have sinned against him. And he has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our judges who judged us by bringing upon us a great disaster.

[5 : 02] For under the whole heaven, such has never been done as what has been done to Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us. Yet we have not made our prayer before the Lord, our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand your truth.

Therefore, the Lord has kept the disaster in mind and brought it upon us. For the Lord, our God, is righteous in all the works which he does, though we have not obeyed his voice.

And now, O Lord, our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and made yourself a name as it is this day. We have sinned.

We have done wickedly. O Lord, according to all your righteousness, I pray, let your anger and your fury be turned away from your city, Jerusalem, your holy mountain.

And because of our sins, for our iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people are reproached to all those around us.

[6 : 05] Now, therefore, our God, hear the prayer of your servant and his supplications. And for the Lord's sake, cause your face to shine on your sanctuary, which is desolate. Oh, my God, incline your ear and hear, open your ears, your eyes and excuse me, and see our desolations in the city, which is called by your name.

For we do not present our supplications before you because of our righteous deeds, but because of your great mercies. Oh, Lord, hear. Oh, Lord, forgive. Oh, Lord, listen and act.

Do not delay for your own sake. My God, for your city and your people are called by your name. Let's pray together. Our Father, as we come before you this morning, we praise you.

We worship you as the great eternal God, the glorious, majestic, only true and living God, the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We give you praise. We give you worship. We humble ourselves before you in the presence of your majesty. We acknowledge that we are dependent upon you for everything that we have.

[7 : 16] It is you who have made us. You are the one who gives us life and breath. It's because of your kindness to us that we awoke this morning and that we've enjoyed the things that we've enjoyed already today.

And we marvel at your goodness toward us. We recognize we don't deserve any of it. We thank you most of all that you have provided for our salvation through your son, the Lord Jesus.

Lord, help us to be mindful of what Christ has done for us today. We thank you for his blood that was shed, that we might have access to you and that we might be reconciled to you and that we might know you as our father, that we might have the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins and acceptance with you.

We thank you today for your word that you've given to us to instruct us, to ground us in the gospel and also to instruct us in the way we are to live as those who are your blood bought sons.

And so we pray, especially today, as we look at this particular passage, help us, give us understanding. May this be blessed to our hearts in a way that will help us to grow in our prayer lives as men.

[8 : 32] And may Jesus Christ be exalted in our midst. Please pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. Lord, we are very much aware of our dependence upon the Holy Spirit in the preaching and the hearing of your word.

Lord, we pray that you would grant what we need in this hour. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. So we come back to Daniel's prayer this morning.

Well, last week, last night, not last week, our focus was on the discovery that inspired Daniel's prayer and the special and focused nature of the prayer that it inspired in verses one to three.

And where did Daniel make this discovery that led him to pray? I remind you, you remember it was while he was engaged in Bible study. He was reading the scrolls, the writings of Jeremiah the prophet, and there he discovered that the desolations of Jerusalem were to be accomplished in 70 years.

And comparing the time marker that's given at the beginning of this chapter with the time when Daniel was carried away into Babylon, as Daniel counted out the years, he knew that the time was almost here.

[9 : 51] It was very close. So what did he do? He gave himself to prayer. And indeed, he gave himself to an especially focused, intensified time of prayer with fasting.

So Daniel believed God's promise. But as we saw yesterday, he also understood that God has ordained that his promised blessings be brought to pass by God's appointed means.

And one of those means is the earnest prayers of his people. So Daniel set his face toward the Lord God to make requests by prayer and supplications. So we're ready now to focus on the actual content of Daniel's prayer.

And it's a beautiful prayer. I think it's the most beautiful prayer that you'll find anywhere in Scripture. It's a powerful prayer. It's a prayer that can teach us how to pray for the revival of the church and for the cause of Christ in the world.

Now, this prayer, as you've noticed, as I've read it, it's fairly long. It would be easy to get bogged down in all the details of this prayer for a long time. And there are various ways you can divide it up and you can approach it.

[10 : 58] What I'm going to do, I'm going to follow the lead of Stuart Oliot and his excellent little practical commentary on the book of Daniel and focus on the general characteristics of the prayer. I'm going to be using the method.

I'm not going to be doing exactly the way he does, but I'm going to be using that method of describing the characteristics of the prayer, mainly using words that end in L-Y, adverbs.

There are five major characteristics of this prayer that I want to focus on in the time remaining that we can learn from and imitate in our own praying, both in general and also in our prayers for spiritual awakening and revival.

So, first of all, notice that Daniel prayed reverently and worshipfully. Notice how his prayer begins in verse 4. And I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession and said, O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant and mercy with those who love him and with those who keep his commandments.

Now, do you see the reverence with which Daniel approaches God? And notice his prayer begins with worship. He doesn't just rush into God's presence immediately, blurting out requests.

[12 : 12] He reminds himself of who God is. He stops, as it were, to consider who it is that he is speaking to, and he worships him.

Notice he worships God for his greatness and fearfulness. O Lord, great and awesome God. Now, that word awesome is a little weak for a translation. The word could actually be translated dreadful or fearful.

O Lord, the great and fearful God. There's a recognition of the greatness and the holiness and purity and power of this God that should cause the soul, as it were, to tremble before him in awe.

But this is also joined here to childlike confidence, praising him for his covenant faithfulness and his mercies. The great and fearful God who keeps covenant and mercy with those who love him.

As Dale Ralph Davis comments here, this God then is both fearful and faithful. He is both great and good. Both one who makes us tremble and the one who keeps us secure.

[13 : 18] And you see here that Daniel, though very briefly, begins his prayer by reminding himself of this. In worshipping God as the fearful and faithful God.

It's the same thing we see in the Lord's Prayer. When you go to the Lord's Prayer and our Lord is teaching us how to pray there, he doesn't immediately go to the petitions that we are to pray. There is a preface to the Lord's Prayer.

You remember the preface? Our Father who is in heaven. Before even getting to the petitions of the prayer, he begins with focusing on who it is to whom we are praying. He is our Father who keeps covenant and mercy toward his children.

But he is our Father in heaven. The great and dreadful God. As we read in Ecclesiastes 5.2, Do not be rash with your mouth. And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God.

Why? For it says, God is in heaven. And you on earth. There is a vast gulf between us and God. In terms of his greatness and his glory and majesty. He is not the old man upstairs.

[14 : 24] He is the great and dreadful and eternal God. And remember your place. Remember his glory. When you come before God in prayer. And this is something we need to learn. So often, even in public prayer meetings sometimes, it is just standing up and request, request, request.

And there is no worship in the prayers. And we are to approach God reverently when we come into his presence. To approach him worshipfully. That does not mean there is no place for ejaculatory prayers.

That is shooting up requests. Or in a time of real pressured circumstances, immediately going to God with our requests. But that should not be our habit. We should approach God in our praying.

First of all, with worship. And approach him reverently. And we see this in Daniel's prayer. Secondly, Daniel prayed penitently. Or we could say repentantly.

Daniel's prayer, you probably notice as we read it, is marked by confession of sin. And by expressions of repentance. Both for himself and for God's people of whom he was a part.

[15 : 27] You notice at the beginning of verse 4. He says, And I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession. And throughout this prayer, we see Daniel confessing his sins and the sins of the people.

He doesn't make excuses for them. He doesn't try to rationalize them. He doesn't try to minimize them. He confesses them for what they truly are acknowledging.

In fact, he acknowledges throughout this prayer that they deserve God's wrath and punishment. Let me draw our attention here to four characteristics of his confession. First of all, he identifies himself with the sins of the nation.

Did you notice that when we read the prayer? Daniel uses the first person plural throughout this prayer. We have sinned. Not they have sinned. We, us.

This is what we see throughout the prayer. As Daniel grieves and mourns over Israel's guilt and confesses Israel's sin, he doesn't throw all the blame on all of those other folks.

[16 : 30] Not me, of course, but those bad people out there. No, this is not a self-righteous prayer. Daniel includes himself. Now, of course, we know that Daniel was a godly man.

Yes, but Daniel also knew himself to be a sinner. And though certainly he was not as sinful as many of his countrymen had been, he knew that his sins had contributed to the full measure of the sins of the nation.

And brothers, we need more of Daniel's attitude in our prayers. You know, sometimes the prayers of Christians can come across very self-righteous. Lord, look at what the Democrats have done.

Or what the abortionists have done. Oh, Lord, look at what the liberals and progressives and the gays and the transgenders and so on are doing. Deliver us from all these bad people and revive us, oh, Lord.

Yes, but what about the things you've done? All right? You, too, are a sinner. And your sins are also offensive to God. And even if by God's grace you've been converted and wonderfully changed in many ways, think about the way you lived before you were converted.

[17 : 42] Those sins for which you are now ashamed. Those sins by which not only you sinned, but you involved others in your sins and encouraged others to sin.

As Peter says in 1 Peter 4, 2, there was a time some of us walked in lewdness, lust, drunkenness, revelries, fornication, drinking parties, abominations of all kinds.

And brothers, as we think about our own country, or more importantly, as we think about the state of the church in America today, if we're honest, don't we all have much to be ashamed of?

Have we not all, in various times and in various ways, contributed to its desolation? Even after we've been converted, have we not contributed by our prayerlessness, our coldness of heart, our lack of love, our slowness to forgive others, our hardness of heart toward the lost around us, the neglect of our Bibles, our worldly mindedness and selfishness, our failure to put into practice so much that we know that God has taught us to whom much is given, much is required.

Yes, brothers, we have all had a part to play in the sad state of this nation and of the church in our country. And like Daniel, we should approach God humbly in our intercessions for revival and restoration, acknowledging the many sins that we too have been guilty of.

[19 : 06] Daniel identified himself with the sins of the nation. It's still under this heading of praying penitently or repentantly. Secondly, he confesses sin by name with its many aggravations.

His confession was not just a general thing. It was very specific. Verse 5, We have sinned and committed iniquity. We have done wickedly and rebelled even by departing from your precepts and your judgments.

Verse 9, We have rebelled against you. Verses 10 to 11, We have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants, the prophets.

Yes, all Israel has transgressed your law. And again, He doesn't diminish these sins. He doesn't minimize them. He highlights, He underscores how evil they really are.

And indeed, truly honest and humble confession of sin does not minimize sin and attempt to play it down. It amplifies it.

[20 : 09] It aggravates it. It searches out the sin in all of its hideous dimensions. Notice at least four things Daniel mentions as aggravations of their sins.

One, they had violated the express and plain commands that God had given to them. In other words, it's not that they didn't know what God required. They did know, but they deliberately refused to obey.

Two, their sins were against the backdrop of God's great goodness that He had shown to them. Daniel says in verse 15, And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and made Yourself a name as it is this day, we have sinned.

We have done wickedly. In other words, Lord, You've been good to us. You redeemed us out of Egyptian bondage and made us Your own special people. And yet, in spite of all of Your goodness to us and all the many ways You have blessed us, we have grievously sinned against You.

It is good for us, brothers, when confessing our sins to remind ourselves of how good God has been to us. You see, one of the most terrible aspects, terrible evils of our sin is the ungratefulness of it.

[21 : 24] The fact that it's been in the very face of such goodness that we have received from God's hand, especially in the very face of what God has done for us in giving us His Son to die and to suffer for us on the cross.

And it was our sins that nailed Him to the cross. As Newton said, a bleeding Savior I have seen, and now I hate my sin. So he aggravates, he speaks to this in his prayer, that what makes their sins even worse is it was against all of the goodness that God had given to them.

And then a third aggravation. Daniel points out how they had slighted the gracious warnings of the prophets. And God in His mercy had sent to them time and again in order to turn them from their sins.

Verse 6, Neither have we heeded your servants, the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers, and all the people of the land. In other words, God didn't punish them immediately.

He gave them many warnings. He was patient with them. He continued to call them to repentance. And yet, in the face of God's many warnings, they would not repent. And then the fourth aggravation he mentions is that even now, after all of these judgments have come upon us, it still has not driven us to godly grief over our sins and genuine repentance as it should have.

[22 : 44] Notice how he points that out in verse 13. As it is written in the law of Moses, All this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not made our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand your truth.

You see how he aggravates their sins. He highlights how awful and evil our sins are. And brothers, it's good for us at times to go beyond the mere basic level of confession, especially when it comes to that besetting sin, or those besetting sins that keep cropping up repeatedly and seem to have such a grip on your life.

If you would root out that sin and mortify it and put it to death, you need to search it out down to its very roots and give fault to and bring out into the light before God its many aggravations and every sin that is attached to it from which it springs.

And that's the way to lance the wound, you see, to open it up fully, that the sanctifying disinfectant of grace might be poured in and produce a complete healing.

So Daniel identifies himself with the sins of the nation. He confesses sin by name with its many aggravations. And it's still under this heading of praying repentantly. Thirdly, in confessing their sins, Daniel acknowledges the righteousness of God.

[24 : 06] In his judgments that he had brought upon them. There's no secret grudge against God in Daniel's prayer. There's no attitude of feeling that God's being too hard, that he's being too severe.

No, his is the language of a true penitent. There is the self-abasing acknowledgement that we deserve these judgments that have come upon us. God's judgments against us for our sins are right.

You see, where there is true repentance, the sinner justifies God and bears all the blame for his sin. And this is what we see Daniel doing on behalf of the nation and also including himself.

Verse 7a, O Lord, righteousness belongs to you, but to us shame of face. Verses 13 and 14. As it's written in the law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not made our prayer before the Lord our God that we might turn from our iniquities and understand your truth.

Therefore, the Lord has kept this disaster in mind and brought it upon us, for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works, which he does, though we have not obeyed his voice.

[25 : 19] So you see, brothers, when we ask for God's blessing upon our nation or upon our church, our churches, or upon ourselves, we must never ask with an attitude that God owes us the blessings that we ask for.

We're not to come to God like the Pharisee in our Lord's parable who said, Lord, look at all the good things I've done. I'm not as other men are. Extortioners, unjust, adulterers, I fast twice in the week.

I pay tithes of all that I possess. Surely, Lord, with all the good things I've done, you ought to hear my prayer. Or to put it, in other words, Lord, I've had my devotions today.

I've read three chapters in the Bible. I'm always in church when the doors are open. I don't go to some liberal church or some Arminian church. Like other people do. I'm a Reformed Baptist.

So then why aren't you hearing my prayers? Well, you know why? Because God will never hear the prayer of anyone who comes to Him thinking that God owes him something.

[26 : 24] We have deserved nothing from God. As a nation, we deserve nothing from God. As churches, and every one of us have deserved nothing from God.

God is individuals, but eternal wrath and judgment. And if we would come to God in prayer and be heard, instead of coming with the attitude of the Pharisees, we must always come like the tax collector in our Lord's parable who cried, God have mercy upon me, a sinner.

All right? Daniel prayed reverently and worshipfully. He prayed penitently. And then thirdly, Daniel prayed specifically. Specifically. Now by that I mean he didn't come to God with nebulous, pious phrases.

He came with specific requests. I mean, when you're reading this prayer, there is no question at all what Daniel's asking God to do. And it's very clear.

He saw Jerusalem, the temple, and the people of God in the desolate state, and he specifically asked God to turn away his anger from them and to look upon them again with favor and mercy. Notice how he prayed specifically with specific requests.

[27 : 38] Verse 16a. Let your anger and your fury be turned away from your city, Jerusalem. Verse 17. Cause your face to shine on your sanctuary, which is desolate.

Verse 18. Oh my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations. Verse 19. Oh Lord, forgive. Oh Lord, listen and act. Do not delay.

Daniel prayed specifically. And so we need to pray specifically, don't we? Isn't it true? I know it is with me sometimes that too often we go to our knees in prayer with no distinct purpose, no distinct, definite, and specific thing or things that we are asking for.

And we just use pious sounding phrases. And if there are any requests, they're very, very general and vague like, Lord, please bless Billy. Well, what exactly do you mean?

Bless Billy. Or please God, bless our church. What do you mean bless our church? What specifically are you asking God to do? You see, many times we pray prayers that really can't be answered specifically because we're not asking for anything specifically.

[28 : 51] And this can happen in private prayer and in private prayer meetings as well. Spurgeon, in his humorous way, tells a story to make this point. He says, I know a church which is endowed with an excellent deacon, a real godly man, but he will pray without ceasing at every meeting.

And I fear he will pray the prayer meeting down to nothing unless he is soon taken home. The other night, when he had talked for a full 20 minutes, he intimated both to heaven and earth that all he had said was merely a preface, a drawing near, as he called it, and that he was then going to begin.

None of his friends were pleased to receive that information for they had begun to cherish the hope that he would soon have done. Now listen to what he says here. Here's the point. As a rule, nothing was really asked for by this estimable brother, but he uttered several pious remarks on all subjects and many more.

Nothing was really asked for, just pious remarks. Well, this was not the case in Daniel's prayer, and may it not be the case with us if we're going to learn to pray like Daniel.

Daniel prayed reverently, Daniel prayed repentantly, Daniel prayed specifically, and now fourthly, notice that Daniel prayed argumentatively, argumentatively.

[30 : 13] This is so important. Now what I mean by that is he enforced his petitions with various pleas and arguments for why God should answer them.

Right? Did you notice that? Now this is something we see in many of the great prayers of the Bible. It's something we all need to learn from. It's the spiritual art, if I might call it that, of stirring up our faith and enforcing our requests by appeals to God's character, God's promises, and God's glory.

What are some of the arguments Daniel uses in this prayer? There's four of them. First of all, he appeals to God's righteousness. Look at verse 16. O Lord, according to all your righteousness, I pray, let your anger and your fury be turned away from your city, Jerusalem, your holy mountain, because of our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers and so on.

Now, do you notice something here? Earlier, in the previous verses, Daniel has acknowledged God's righteousness in the judgments he had brought upon the nation.

We just looked at that a moment ago. O Lord, righteousness belongs to you, but to us, shame of face. Verse 7.

[31 : 34] Verse 14. Therefore the Lord has kept the disaster in mind and brought all this upon us, for our Lord is righteous in all the works which he does. So Daniel extols God's righteousness in bringing these calamities upon us.

We saw that earlier. But you'll notice here in verse 16 that he appeals to God's righteousness as an argument for him to turn away his anger and to forgive them.

Now, how is that? How can he appeal to God's righteousness in both of these ways? Well, God's righteousness in Scripture basically means his integrity.

And sometimes it means conformity to a norm. As Sinclair Ferguson points out in his commentary, in the case of God, the norm to which he conforms is his own being and character.

He is true to himself. He always acts in character. But again, how can God's righteous character be both the basis for God's judgment upon his people and also the basis of Daniel's prayer for forgiveness and restoration?

[32 : 39] Well, the answer is this. The same God who promises to judge sin has also provided an atonement for sin for those who repent.

And he promises to forgive those who do. And this makes it righteous for God to forgive believing, repenting sinners. Because God is righteous, he's not only true to his threats, he's true to his promises.

Now, can you think of a New Testament parallel to this? Think about the text we so often quote. 1 John 1.9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and what?

You know, we might expect, think the next word would be merciful. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and merciful to forgive our sins. That's true, but that's not what the text says.

It says, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just. Dikos. Faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[33 : 48] How is it that God is righteous to forgive our sins? It's because Jesus Christ has suffered and died on the cross in our place for our sins.

He has taken upon himself the punishment that we deserve. The debt has been fully paid for all those who believing upon him repent of their sins before God.

Therefore, it would be unjust and unrighteous for God not to forgive them. And it's not only merciful, it is righteous for him to do so.

My dear friend, have you realized this? I wonder, maybe there's someone here in this retreat who's not a believer, not a Christian, you've never been converted, perhaps you think your sins are too great to be forgiven.

God is righteous. How can he do anything else but send me to hell? Yes, but if you come in faith to Jesus Christ, confessing your sin and your need of God's mercy, at that point, God's righteousness is now on your side.

[34 : 50] And you can even plead God's righteousness as one of the reasons. For God to forgive you and to receive you. Oh Lord, my sins are great, but Christ has died for sinners.

His blood has paid the debt and you have promised to forgive all of those who look to him in faith. Therefore, oh God, according to your righteousness, let your wrath that was poured out upon him in my place be turned away from me and pardon my iniquities.

That's the gospel. We see the gospel here in Daniel chapter 9 in his prayer. This plea is a strong plea for the lost sinner that God will never reject and it continues to be appropriate for the Christian.

When we're aware that we have sinned, we are to know and to be assured that God forgives us as we confess those sins not only because he is merciful, but because he is righteous and those sins have already been dealt with on the cross.

So that's the first argument he uses. Notice there's a second argument Daniel uses. He also appeals to the relationship between God and his people.

[36 : 01] In other words, he reminds God as it were. Of course, God already knows this, but he presses before him this plea that the Jerusalem which is desolate is after all your Jerusalem, oh God.

Your holy mountain. Notice how Daniel does this. Verse 16. Oh Lord, according to your righteousness, turn away your wrath from us.

Notice the middle of the verse. Turn away, let your fury be turned away from your city. Notice how he says it.

Your city, Jerusalem, your holy mountain because of our sins because of our sins. Because of our sins. And for the iniquities of our fathers. Jerusalem and your people are a reproach to all those around us.

The implication is, God, how can you stand by? How can you stand by and do nothing when it's your own people? It's your own city that's in such a terrible condition.

[37 : 12] And he carries this same argument into verse 17. Notice what he says. Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of your servant and his supplications and for the Lord's sake cause your face to shine on your sanctuary which is desolate.

the temple in Jerusalem have been the only place in the whole world devoted to the worship and service of the one true God.

And it's that place, your sanctuary, which is now lying desolate. And again, notice in verse 18, Oh my God, incline your ear and hear, open your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by your name.

Dear brothers, we can bring the same plea before God when praying for the awakening and revival of the church in our land. We are saying in effect, Lord, we have sinned.

We have forsaken your truth. And though we have deserved all of these calamities that have come upon us, though we have deserved that your spirit has been largely taken away from us and we become the laughing stock of the world around us, yet remember, oh Lord, that we are your people and the church is your church.

[38 : 34] We are called by your name. And then thirdly, related to that, Daniel appeals to God's own glory because we are your people and Jerusalem is your city and the temple is your sanctuary.

Your reputation, O God, is at stake in this. You see, the greatest concern of all and the greatest reason, O Lord, for you to answer my prayer is for your own glory.

Notice how Daniel uses this plea. Picking up at the end of verse 16. Jerusalem and your people are reproached to all those around us. Now, therefore, our God, hear the prayer of your servant and his supplication and for the Lord's sake, cause your face to shine on your sanctuary which is desolate.

Look at verse 19. O Lord, hear. O Lord, forgive. O Lord, listen and act. Do not delay. For your own sake, my God, for your city and your people are called by your name.

We are called by his name. And this is true prayer, brothers. Prayer that's driven by a heartfelt burden for the glory of God. This is the primary concern of Daniel's prayer.

[39 : 56] O Lord, wash away the shame that has been heaped upon your name by our sins. In your righteous judgments against us, remember your name.

Remember your glory upon the earth. Your name that you have bound together with your church. Daniel's plea is not that God will act for Israel for the people's sake because they don't deserve it.

That's not the main plea. They forfeited any right to his favor because of their rebellion and repeated sinning. Even with all the light that had been given to them and all the goodness God had shown to them.

But the fact still remains that they are known as his people who are called by his name. And therefore, you see, their continued desolate state reflects badly on God.

You see, this is the argument. It will look as though God doesn't care for them. Or as though God isn't powerful enough to help them. Or as though the God of the Bible doesn't even exist.

[41 : 02] And that the message of the Bible is just another religious myth like all other world religions. And the same plea is for us, brothers. The heathen world around us.

And I'm not talking about heathens out in the, you know, other places where there's no gospel witness. But the heathen of North America, of our own country. They will form their estimate of the God we worship on the basis of the welfare of his people who are called by his name.

And therefore, God must act. This is a plea that we need to bring before God in prayer. He must act for his own namesake, for the sake of his own honor and reputation, which will be dragged through the mud if he doesn't intervene.

And I find this to be very encouraging. What a plea we have here to bring before the throne of grace as to why God should bless the church.

Bless your church. Bless our church. What a plea to bring before him in all of your prayers for the health of the church and the revival of the church and the prosperity of the church both here and throughout our country and for the cause of Christ throughout the world.

[42 : 15] So Daniel appeals to God's righteousness. He appeals to the special relationship between God and his people. And he appeals to the cause of God's own glory, his own namesake.

But finally, there's one other argument that Daniel uses. He appeals to God's mercy. And this brings us to the fifth and the final characteristic of Daniel's prayer.

He prayed worshipfully, reverently. He prayed repentantly, specifically, argumentatively. And then fifthly, Daniel prayed believingly.

He prayed believing and trusting in God as a God of mercy. A God who delights in mercy. A God who is ever ready to forgive those who repent and call upon Him.

Look at verse 9. To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him. The end of verse 18. For we do not present our supplications before you because of our righteous deeds, but because of your great mercies.

[43 : 22] Daniel knew God as a God of mercy. A God who is ready to pardon. Forgiving iniquity and sin. And how could God do that and still be holy? And still be righteous?

Well, the answer to that question was revealed to Old Testament saints like Daniel in types and shadows and promises. In the promises of a coming deliverer who would redeem His people from their sins.

And Daniel knew the promises and he believed the promises. The blood of bulls and goats and lambs sacrificed upon the altar were pointing to a more perfect sacrifice that was yet to come to the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world.

God is a God who delights in mercy and is ready to forgive when we are ready to repent, but not in a way that compromises His holiness and justice. Daniel had hope and encouragement to pray that God would forgive His people and He would have mercy upon them and that He would revive them again because He knew that God Himself had promised to provide an atonement.

And because of what Christ would do and has now done, there is no sin so great. There is no person who is such a sinner, no people or nation or church who are so defiled with wickedness as to be beyond the hope of mercy.

[44 : 48] There is no reason they cannot be forgiven if they trust in God's mercy in Christ freely given to sinners in the gospel and are willing to repent of their sins.

It's the gospel that holds out hope. It's the gospel that holds out hope for the revival of the church in our day. God is sovereign in His grace. We can't predict what He will do or what He will not do, but we know that because of the cross, there is a firm foundation laid upon which God can show mercy and pour out His Spirit upon those who do not deserve it but deserve His anger.

And we know that God has told us to pray and He has given us examples like this in His Word like we have here in this chapter to encourage us to pray. And He has promised that the fervent prayers of His people are not wasted, but they are part of the means that He has appointed by which His saving blessings are brought down upon His church and upon the world.

Well, may God help us then to learn how to pray like Daniel. We'll stop here and we'll come back to this in the next session.

Let's pray together. Our Father, we thank You for this wonderful prayer. The lessons that are here for us, help us to take them to heart. Stir us up, Lord. We are so weak.

[46 : 14] Lord, we try to pray and it's stumbling and confused at times. Help us. Give us the spirit of prayer. Pour out Your Holy Spirit upon us as men and upon our churches that we might lay hold upon You.

That it would not be said of us as it was said by the prophet of old that there is no one who stirs up himself to lay hold upon God. May that not be true of us.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.