

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

“The man who has met God in Christ is no longer what he used to be, he is a new man and for him old things are passed away and behold all things are become new. Have you seen yourself responsible before a holy God? Have you met God, is He real to you, do you know Him? Is this knowledge of God in Christ the biggest thing, the central thing in your life? Are you aware of a new man in yourself, a new life, a new interest, a new power, a new being, something beyond yourself that you cannot understand, and have you said with Paul, ‘I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me’? [Martyn Lloyd Jones, Old Testament Evangelistic Sermons, Banner of Truth]

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

www.unholycharade.com (blog)

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The Prayer of Daniel

March 16th, 2025

Sermon Text: Daniel 9

Scripture Reading: 2 Chronicles

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“The Christian’s faith persuades him that God will perform His promises, and therefore is stimulated to prayer. For the true proof of genuine faith is the assurance when we pray that God will really perform what he has promised us. Daniel is set before us here as an example of this. When he understood from the words of Scripture that the time of deliverance was at hand, this

became a stimulus to him to pray more earnestly than he was accustomed to do. *Nothing can be better for us than to ask for what God has promised.* Resting upon God's Word we exercise true confidence in prayer." [John Calvin]

Follow along as I read this prayer of Daniel. We have the context in the first two verses:

Daniel 9:1-19 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans— (2) in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

Daniel had been reading this passage in the book of Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 25:8-12 "Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: Because you have not obeyed my words, (9) behold, I will send for

all the tribes of the north, declares the LORD, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations. I will devote them to destruction, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. (10) Moreover, I will banish from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the grinding of the millstones and the light of the lamp. (11) This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. (12) Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the LORD, making the land an everlasting waste.

Realizing that the 70 years were drawing to an end, Daniel prays:

(3) Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer

and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. (4) I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, (5) we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. (6) 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.

(7) To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. (8) To us, O LORD, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you.

(9) To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him (10) and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. (11) All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him.

(12) He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem. (13) As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of the LORD our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth. (14) Therefore the LORD has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in all

the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice.

(15) And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

(16) “O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us. (17) Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate.

(18) O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. **For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy.** (19) O Lord, hear; O

Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.”

Sackcloth and Ashes

As we just heard from John Calvin, Daniel’s prayer is his response in real faith to the Word of God which he had been reading. The Lord, through Jeremiah, had announced that the Babylonian captivity judgment would end after 70 years. Daniel was now an old man. He had been through many trials and triumphs of faith during the rules of both Babylonian and Media-Persia rulers. And now as for himself he may never see Jerusalem again. Most probably he died in Babylon, but we are justified in wondering if he, like Joseph long before him, requested that his bones be taken back to Jerusalem for burial. We can only speculate on this.

What do we learn about real prayer from this tremendous prayer of Daniel? First, we see this:

Genuine prayer, especially a prayer of confession of sin, approaches God in sackcloth and ashes. That is, we come to the throne of grace boldly, yet in the fear of the Lord, knowing His holiness. And we come in lowly humility, asking only because of His mercy.

“...listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy.”
(vs 17)

“For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy.” (vs 18)

Sackcloth and ashes is of course the common term designating sorrow for sin. The sins of his nation are weighing heavily on Daniel – *“I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.”*

This theme is consistent throughout Daniel’s prayer. We can pray boldly only because we have a great high priest, our Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. In Him we find mercy – undeserved favor toward us.

Praying for Our Nation

Daniel is praying for His nation, asking for God’s mercy upon his countrymen. Upon his sinful nation. All of the Old Testament prophets lived in just such a nation -

In our day, this real fear of the Lord and this genuine confession of sin in lowliness, knowing Christ as our Redeemer, is grown rather rare. Sin does not sell, so it is not made mention of so much. The prayer of Daniel is markedly different. *“..seeking Him by prayer and pleas for mercy.”* You see this repeatedly in his prayer:

Isaiah 1:4 Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD, they have

“To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him.” (vs 9)

despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged.

Have you ever wondered about the answers to these questions?

- *Should* we pray for our nation?
- How should we pray for our nation?
- Can a Christian be a patriot...Should a Christian say the pledge of allegiance

These are absolutely pertinent questions in our day – and Daniel’s prayer serves as an answer and a model for us in this regard. To the first question, *should we pray for our nation*, the answer is obviously, YES! Daniel is a Godly man as was the Apostle Paul and consistently in Scripture we see them and others praying for their nation. For their *sinful* nation.

But given that answer, another and in some ways more difficult question arises:

How should we pray for our nation?

God’s true people, genuine believers who truly know the Lord, know full well that it is an affront to God’s holiness to pray *God bless America!* as if America *deserves* His blessing. Because we know that just as Isaiah put it, America is a sinful nation, laden with iniquity, deserving judgment, not blessing.

How then should we pray for our nation? And *can a Christian be a patriot? Should we as Christians, citizens of God’s kingdom, say – for example – the pledge of allegiance?* “I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” Is that a vow that a Christian should recite?

Some Christians in the history of the church have concluded that it is not permissible to do so and that in a sense then the Christian is only a “patriot” of the kingdom of God.

But once more, we can see in Scripture the answer given us is quite different than that. Yes, we are citizens and patriots ultimately of God's kingdom. That is where our ultimate allegiance lies. *But Daniel's prayer shows us that he was a patriot of his homeland. He had great concern for Jerusalem which was in ruins. He grieved for his countrymen.*

Furthermore:

1 Peter 2:13-15 Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, (14) or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. (15) For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

Proverbs 24:21 My son, fear the LORD and the king, and do not join with those who do otherwise,

Matthew 22:21 They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the

things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

A Christian in fact is the greatest patriot. We seek the true good of our nation. We want God to bless America, and we know that real blessing comes from Him only to a nation that fears and obeys Him.

NOTE: There are of course limitations to earthly patriotism. We must obey God rather than the king when the king's commands oppose God's. Christians living when Antichrist comes to power will not swear allegiance by receiving the mark of the beast. Worship belongs only to the living and true God. Patriotism then is not worship of the state, such as was seen for instance in Nazi Germany under Hitler.

How, then, do we pray for America? Let's look for the answer here in this prayer of Daniel.

We Pray as Members of our Nation AND as Priests and Intercessors

It is striking that Daniel uses, throughout His prayer, the first person pronouns. *We, Our.* “*We have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly...WE have not listened to your servants the prophets...To US belongs open shame...WE have rebelled and have not obeyed...All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon US, because WE have sinned against him.*”

The first truth which we must get hold of as we pray for our nation is that WE are part of America. In a corporate sense, what Israel was is what Daniel was. And yet Daniel had not sinned. He was faithful to God.

In a personal sense we are not held guilty for the sins of the rest of our countrymen. But there is a kind of corporate sense in which WE represent our nation to the Lord. WE speak as mediators between our sinful nation and

God. Perhaps this is in part what God’s Word says:

Exodus 19:6 and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

A kingdom of priests. A priest, in the sense given in Scripture, represents the people he himself belongs to, to God. The priest intercedes for those people. In Christ WE are a kingdom of priests. So we pray, we intercede before God FOR the people of which we are a part. That, I suggest, is what Daniel was doing when he included himself in the confession of the sin of Israel.

This priestly office then, given to ALL Christians (the priesthood of Rome is a false, unbiblical one) is a great privilege. WE have the authority given to us in Christ to approach the throne of grace and intercede for America. This is one thing we learn from Daniel’s prayer.

As Priests, Our Prayers Begin with Confession of the Sins of Our Nation

Daniel's prayer is largely a confession of the sins of Israel.

Daniel 9:3-6 Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. (4) I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, (5) we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. (6) 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.

The typical "God bless America" prayers of our day completely skip the acknowledgment and confession of the terrible sins of

America. But a true patriot who is a true Christian, does not gloss over the real problem. What is wrong with America? What is the cause of our troubles? It is simply this – *sin*. It is the fundamental sin of refusing to acknowledge God and given Him thanks. Of living our lives as if God were irrelevant.

Daniel's nation had for many, many years – actually from the very start – disobeyed God. And He had warned them:

Deuteronomy 28:15-16 "But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. (16) Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field.

Deuteronomy 28:63-68 And as the LORD took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the LORD will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you. And you shall be plucked off the

land that you are entering to take possession of it. (64) “And the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. (65) And among these nations you shall find no respite, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot, but the LORD will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul. (66) Your life shall hang in doubt before you. Night and day you shall be in dread and have no assurance of your life. (67) In the morning you shall say, ‘If only it were evening!’ and at evening you shall say, ‘If only it were morning!’ because of the dread that your heart shall feel, and the sights that your eyes shall see. (68) And the LORD will bring you back in ships to Egypt, a journey that I promised that you should never make again; and there you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer.”

They had been warned, just as our nation has long been warned. But they refused to obey and now Jerusalem lay in ruins and they were captive in a foreign land.

It is this point at which Daniel’s prayer begins. He does not make demands. He does not offer excuses. He does not charge God with injustice and unkindness. No, In sackcloth and ashes He comes as a priest, confessing the sins of his nation and declaring that God is perfectly righteous and just in His dealings with them.

Right now in our nation we are seeing God’s mercy shown to us. We are seeing renewed hope as evil has been dealt a blow. And yet...we ask God’s people know that OUR nation has not repented. We are thankful that there is an acknowledgement to some degree of the Lord, but genuine acknowledgement and confession of and repentance from sin has not happened. And yet, as God’s people, we know Him – we know that the Lord requires confession of sin and repentance from it:

2 Chronicles 7:13-14 When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, (14) if my people **who are called by my name** humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

We see something here that we dare not miss. Before the priest could intercede for Israel, he had to go through a cleansing and purification.

Leviticus 16:3-4 But in this way Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with a bull from the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. (4) He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water and then put them on.

In Daniel's prayer, we see Daniel acting as priest to his sinful nation. He in a sense purifies himself in sackcloth, ashes, and fasting. He acknowledges his own sin in humility, then intercedes for Israel.

I say this because this passage from 2 Chronicles *specifies a condition* – *IF my people WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME*. That is to say, confession of sin and repentance must begin with God's own people. The church. Are we seeing this in our day? I answer – no, we are not.

The visible church in America is in a pathetic and sinful condition. People who call themselves by Christ's name – Christians – are not humbling themselves and turning from their wicked ways. The **ONLY** prayers being heard by God are those of the true church, the remnant. Every week and sometimes more often the secular news reports still more crime and wickedness discovered in some local church – often the “mega” churches which so many professing Christians are flocking

to. To such “churches” the Lord has this to say –

Isaiah 1:11-16 “What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. (12) “When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? (13) Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations— I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. (14) Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. (15) When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. (16) Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil,

Where does this leave us then? Is there hope? Well, apparently Daniel thought so! He prayed, he believed God’s promises and he had a certain hope for his nation.

Look at this:

Daniel 9:20-23 While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the LORD my God for the holy hill of my God, (21) **while I was speaking in prayer**, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. (22) He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, “O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding. (23) **At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved.** Therefore consider the word and understand the vision.

This reminds us of James 5 –

Yet There is Hope

James 5:16-18 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. **The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.** (17) Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. (18) Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

Age” of America is our hope. No, our hope is in the Lord, in seeking His mercy and all for His glory:

Daniel 9:18-19 O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. (19) O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.”

This promise applies not only to Daniel, but to every real Christian who prays as Daniel did. Elijah was just like us. God hears our prayers, and He hears our prayers for our sinful nation.

The true and great and really ONLY need of America AND of the Church at this present time is – *the revival effected by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of sinners and in the hearts of Christ’s people.* Only then will God’s real blessing come. We must take care that we do not skip this fundamental requirement of God and just assume that the promised “Golden