

“The Prayer of the Penitent” 5

Daniel 9:8-19

Hello friend and welcome to *Hope for Today*. My name is J. Mark Horst; I’m your friend and Bible teacher. The program you’re listening to is produced by Heralds of Hope, an international Gospel radio and literature ministry.

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For the past few weeks on *Hope for Today* we’ve been studying from Daniel chapter nine. Our study is titled “The Prayer of the Penitent.” Chapter nine gives us several steps of action that will characterize a repentant person. So far, we’ve looked at the following steps: *seek God’s face*, *confess your sins*, and *confess God’s righteousness*. Today we will conclude our study with the final step, *cry out for forgiveness and restoration*.

Now, to resume our study, I will read the text, **Daniel 9:8 to 19**, and we’ll look at the final step of action in the prayer of the penitent.

Scripture

Daniel further appeals to God’s righteousness. He acknowledges that God was righteous in bringing judgment on Judah and Jerusalem. He had promised that He would do that if His people wouldn’t obey Him. But Daniel reminds God that it’s also right that He will forgive and restore the repentant according to His promises. Listen to Deuteronomy 30:1 to 6.

“Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you, and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you. If any of you

are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.”

Based on God’s promises and His righteous character, Daniel appeals for the reproach of Jerusalem and Judah to be taken away. Yes, Daniel cares about the city and its people, but he’s also concerned about how the heathen nations perceive God and His power. He seeks God’s forgiveness, in verses 17, 18, and 19, based on God’s righteousness.

Remember First John 1:9? *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* Where is God’s righteousness in that promise? God is “just” to forgive our sins for two reasons: first He is faithful, that is, faithful to His promises, and second, He is just in forgiving us because Jesus’ death satisfied the legal requirements of our being made righteous.

Notice in verse 17 Daniel appeals to God to *“...cause your face to shine upon your Sanctuary that is desolate...”* Now remember, back in verse 3 Daniel *“...set his face unto the Lord God...”* I said earlier that this is another way of saying that he’s giving God his undivided attention. Now, Daniel is asking God to reciprocate, to show His divine approval by restoring Israel’s sanctuary, the Temple.

When you and I sin, our physical temple, our body, isn’t usually destroyed (although there can be physical consequences of sin). But our spiritual temple, the place where God dwells by His Spirit is defiled, and God’s glory is diminished. There is an interruption in our fellowship with the Father because sin (temporarily) clouds that relationship. If we persist in that sin, and refuse to repent, then we jeopardize our relationship with Him.

I must admit, as I meditated on these verses, I have seen repentance and confession in a new light. Yes, these actions are about cleansing your guilt and mine; Jesus’ death provided for that cleansing. And I know the spiritual and emotional release that comes to me when I am honest with God about my sin. But Daniel’s prayer suggests the primary reason for seeking forgiveness is for God’s glory to be restored in us. When we are in a right relationship with God, then those around us will see God in our lifestyle and in our responses to them – and they will glorify Him. Jesus talks quite a bit about this subject in John chapter 17.

As I observe the modern church, I see a lot of man-centeredness rather than God-centeredness. Many pastors refuse to talk about sin because it is offensive, it will drive people away. For too many, the Gospel is a 12-step program to a more fulfilling life. Daniel doesn't make that mistake. He doesn't focus primarily on Israel, although he clearly enumerates their sins. His primary focus is on God: God's glory, God's reputation among unbelievers, and God's holy jealousy. We need a revival like Isaiah had when he had a vision of God's glory!

We are in a time of worldwide turmoil because of the coronavirus. I don't claim to know the mind of God or all the reasons this has happened now. But historically, God has used trials and hardship to arrest the attention of those who are going nonchalantly through life without paying much attention to Him and His Word. This is especially true for those who profess to be the people of God. I personally believe God is calling us to evaluate our relationship with Him through this difficult time.

Here in the west, we have become so enamored with the idols of our age, sports, entertainment, possessions, and pleasure. We have compromised our freedoms and safety for the sake of cheap goods that fuel our discontent, not realizing the high cost we're actually paying. We may very well be entering a time of economic decline and a curtailment of freedoms we've long taken for granted. Yet, instead of being fearful, we should look at Daniel's prayer of penitence as a model for us to follow.

There are indications that the current difficulties are generating spiritual interest. That happened after 9-1-1 too. But in a few short weeks, people went back to the previous normal and our culture continued "slouching toward Gomorrah." Will it be different this time? Only if God's people get on their faces like Daniel did and confess their sin and seek God's glory above all else.

God judged Israel because of their idolatry, their callous attitude to the poor, and their mistaken impression that because they were the people of God, they were untouchable. We're guilty of the same things, my friend. And God in His grace is giving us an opportunity to repent, an opportunity to declare His majesty and glory to world lost in darkness.

Will we go on our merry way, or will we humble ourselves before God? Will we seek God's face, confess our sins, confess God's righteousness, and cry out for forgiveness and restoration? I urge you my friend to join me in sincerely praying the prayer of the penitent!