

Key:

Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread

Blue – Explanation/Exposition

Red – Application

Green – Illustration

Brown – Quotation

Yellow – Sermon Notes

When Scripture Sends Us to Our Knees

Daniel 9:1–19

Let's take our Bibles together and turn to the book of Daniel in the OT. Daniel is my favorite book of the Bible. And today we come to one of my favorite chapters of Daniel, chapter 9. Because recorded in this chapter is one of the greatest, one of the most memorable, one of the most heartfelt prayers recorded in the Bible.

The well-known speaker and quadriplegic Joni Eareckson Tada said once, "Amazing, isn't it, that our prayers, whether grand and glorious or feeble and faint, can move the very heart of God who created the universe? Prayer moves God, and when God moves in your life, things get exciting!"¹ Joni knows a thing or two about prayer. She's lived that.

Charles Spurgeon, the great nineteenth century Baptist preacher said this: "We should pray when we are in a praying mood, for it would be sinful to neglect so fair an opportunity. We should pray when we are not in a proper mood, for it would be dangerous to remain in so unhealthy a condition."²

William Temple, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, said once, "When I pray, coincidences happen, and when I don't, they don't."³

Why do Christian men and women throughout church history pray and advocate for prayer? Why have God-fearers and believers been doing this for *literally* thousands of years? Well, one of the reasons is that we see prayer modeled by God's people in Scripture: 1) the early church, 2) Mary with her "*Magnificat*" in Luke 1, 3) the Apostle Paul, 4) King David in the Psalms, 5) Jesus in the Gospels, 6) Hannah in the OT, 7) Moses in the OT, 8) Ezra and Nehemiah in the OT, 9) Stephen in the book of Acts, etc., etc.

And then also, there's Daniel. In the midst of a book that is chock full of prophetic visions and amazing historical narratives, Daniel records one of the most amazing prayers ever prayed in the Bible.⁴ And today we get to read it. Today, we get to study it.⁵ We get to learn from it. And, in our own practice of prayer, we get to imitate it.

Let me give you four statements about Daniel's prayer from Daniel 9:1–19, church. These are four aspects of Daniel's prayer that we should imitate.⁶ Here's the first.⁷

¹ Joni Eareckson Tada, "Faith Can Move Mountains, but Prayer Moves God," *FaithGateway*, accessed September 16, 2026, <https://www.faithgateway.com/faith-move-mountains-prayer-moves-god/>.

² Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Salt-Cellars: Being a Collection of Proverbs, Together with Homely Notes Thereon*, vol. 2 (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1889), 58.

³ William Temple, quoted in Douglas V. Steere, *Dimensions of Prayer* (New York: Association Press, 1962).

⁴ Walvoord, *Daniel*, 254: "His custom of praying three times a day with his windows open to Jerusalem revealed his own heart for the things of God and his concern for the holy city."

⁵ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Daniel*, Third Edition, Ariel Bible Commentary (Ariel: San Antonio, 2025), 141: "Daniel was about eighty-one years old and had thus far dealt with the following visions: in 602 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar's dream image (2:1-45); in 553 B.C., the four beasts and the Ancient of Days (7:1-28); and in 551 B.C., the ram and the he-goat (8:1-27). Now, in 539 B.C., after the fall of Babylon, he was about to receive another vision."

⁶ Walvoord, *Daniel*, 262–3: "Daniel's holy life, careful preparation in approaching God, uncompromising confession of sin, and appeal to God's holy character illustrate the kind of prayer that God delights to answer. Led by the Spirit of God, Daniel had expressed precisely the prayer that God wanted to hear and answer."

1) Daniel's prayer **responds** to **Scripture** (Dan 9:1–2)⁸

Look at **Daniel 9:1**.

¹ In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus,⁹ 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 Jeremiah¹⁰ the prophet,¹¹ must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.¹²

Now just a few comments here on the setting of **Daniel 9**. Daniel is probably still in the city of Babylon. But the city is no longer part of the Babylonian kingdom. If you remember from **Daniel 5**, the Medo-Persians attacked the ridiculously incompetent King Belshazzar. And they took over the kingdom. And Darius the Mede is put in charge of the Chaldeans—i.e., the Babylonians.

King Darius, by the way, was the figure who was forced by his officials to put Daniel in the lions' den in **Daniel 6**. That didn't work out great for those officials. Daniel was spared because an angel of the Lord clamped down the mouths of the lions. But the angel of the Lord *didn't* clamp down the mouths of those lions when those officials were thrown into the den.

Sometime before or after that event with the lions' den, the prayer of **Daniel 9** took place. And by now, Daniel is an old man held hostage in a second beastly kingdom. It's no longer the Babylonian lion with eagles' wings. Those wings have been plucked off (**Dan 7:1–4**). Instead, it's the Medo-Persian bear with three ribs in its mouth devouring much flesh (**Dan 7:5**). And Daniel's longing for his people to be restored to the land of Israel and Jerusalem.

And as part of that, Daniel was reading the prophet Jeremiah. Daniel was just a boy when Jeremiah wrote his prophecies. Jeremiah was there when Jerusalem was destroyed and the captives were taken to Babylon including Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

⁷ Miller, *Daniel*, NAC, 243: "This prayer is a model for believers today as they approach God. After a brief introduction (v. 4a) it proceeds with adoration of the Lord (v. 4b), is followed by confession of personal and national sin (vv. 5–14), and concludes with the prophet's petition (vv. 15–19). Here is the proper order, for only after the Lord is praised and sin confessed is the believer qualified to offer requests to the holy God."

⁸ Walvoord, *Daniel*, 255: "Effective prayer requires faith in His Word, proper attitude of mind and heart, privacy, and unhurried confession and petition."

⁹ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Daniel*, 141: "Ahasuerus is the biblical rendering of the Old Persian name *Khashayarsha*, represented in Greek as Xerxes. Some English Bible translations, such as the NIV and the Berean Standard Bible, use this Greek name in Daniel 9:1. Yet this rendering is unfortunate because it conflates Ahasuerus of Daniel 9 with Ahasuerus of Esther 7:5 and 8:1 and Ezra 4:4–6. This Ahasuerus was Xerxes I (r. 485–465 B.C.), the son of the Persian king Darius I. So, in Esther and Ezra, Darius was the father and Ahasuerus the son. In Daniel, Darius was the son and Ahasuerus the father."

¹⁰ J. Paul Tanner, *Daniel*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2020), 523: "That copies of his writings were made and distributed so soon to those in exile in Babylon evidences their quick recognition as Scripture. Daniel (as did others) certainly regarded them as the inspired Word of God, since he referred to them as 'the word of Yahweh to Jeremiah the prophet.'"

¹¹ Miller, *Daniel*, NAC, 241: "'According to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet' is a strong affirmation of verbal inspiration. The writer of Daniel believed that the sacred Scriptures, in this case the prophecies of Jeremiah, were the very words of God delivered to the world through a human instrument."

¹² Tanner, *Daniel*, 524n125: "If seventy years are reckoned from 586 bc, the *terminus ad quem* would be about 516 bc (approximately the year that the temple reconstruction was completed). However, the Babylonians had been removed from power some twenty-three years earlier (539 bc). Jer 25:12 indicates that the king of Babylon would be punished when the seventy years were *completed*. So the "completion" of the seventy years must be significantly earlier than 516 bc. The same logic would apply to using 597 bc, Nebuchadnezzar's second invasion, as the beginning date (as Collins, 349, has asserted). Those who try to identify the *terminus a quo* with 605 bc are forced to admit that "the seventy years" is nothing more than a round number (so Hill, 160). An alternative to using the year 605 bc as the *terminus a quo* would be to use the date 609 bc, as R. Winkle, "Jeremiah's Seventy Weeks for Babylon: A Re-Assessment. Part II: The Historical Data," *AUSS* 25 (1987): 289–99, has suggested. This would be the year that Nebuchadnezzar made a final and conclusive defeat of the last remnant of the Assyrian armies led by Aššur-uballiṭ II at Harran. This marked the end of the Assyrian Empire and the rise to power of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar. In conjunction with this event, Pharaoh Neco II of Egypt killed King Josiah (July 609 bc), and Judah lost her independence and became a vassal state of Egypt and four years later of Babylon itself. Jer 25:11 mentions multiple nations serving the king of Babylon during these seventy years (and these are described in Jer 25:17–26), so that the seventy years represented not just an affliction upon Judah. This began to take place in the aftermath of Nebuchadnezzar's victory at Harran in 609 bc. Seventy years after 609 bc would be 539 bc, the year Babylon was overthrown."

And here's what Jeremiah wrote. In **chapter 25** of that prophetic book, Jeremiah prophesies seventy years of exile and judgment.¹³ **Jeremiah writes, "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 **[the Babylonians]** 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" (**Jer 25:8–12**).

Jeremiah repeats this prophecy a few chapters later in **Jeremiah 29:10**: "For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place."

So, Daniel was reading one or both of these texts from Scripture in Babylon, and he starts realizing, **"The clock is about to strike. The seventy years are almost up. The desolations are almost over!"**¹⁴

But notice what Daniel does next. He doesn't go pack his bags. He doesn't send out an all-points bulletin to all the Jews in Babylon. He doesn't even celebrate the fact that these seventy years have passed. No, here's what he does—he prays. He gets on his knees. He cries out to the Lord.

Look at **verse 3**.

³ *Then I turned my face to the Lord God,*

This could be literal or figurative. I imagine Daniel at this point lifting up his face and his hands to God. Oftentimes this was done with Hebrews while they were on their knees. That was a common posture of supplication.

The title of this message is "When Scripture Sends Us to Our Knees." You can take that figuratively or literally also. I personally see Daniel here *literally* on his knees before God, head and arms lifted up to heaven as he's praying.

And look at the end of **verse 3**.

*seeking him [the Lord God] by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.*¹⁵

Consider once again how amazing it is that we can bring our prayers and pleas to the Lord. That is a privilege that we should never get over. It's shocking that the God of the Universe actually listens to our prayers. That privilege was not lost on Daniel.

Sackcloth and ash, as many of you know, was a demonstration of humble self-abasement in the ancient world. You would put an uncomfortable piece of clothing, usually covered with goat hair, over you. And then, you would take burned up ash... not the ash that comes from dead animals... that would be unclean for a Jew... but cold ash from a previous fire and sprinkle it over you. Those two things mixed with fasting would be an incredibly uncomfortable experience.

By the way, you don't have to fast for God to hear your prayers. You are not obligated to put on sackcloth and ashes to get God to hear you. Daniel isn't doing this so that God would hear him. He does this

¹³ Walvoord, *Daniel*, 250: "In 597 B.C. Jeremiah had even written a letter to the exiles in Babylon (Jer. 29) in which he had announced that their time in captivity would last seventy years (v. 10). Jeremiah himself had been taken captive by Jews rebelling against Nebuchadnezzar and had been carried off to Egypt against his will to be buried in a strange land in a nameless grave. But the timeless Scriptures that he wrote found their way across desert and mountain to faraway Babylon and fell into the hands of Daniel... The time of the vision recorded in Daniel 9 was 538 B.C., about 67 years after Jerusalem had first been captured and Daniel carried off to Babylon (605 B.C.)."

¹⁴ After the fact, in a later context, Zechariah states as follows, "O LORD of hosts, how long will you have no mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which you have been angry these seventy years?" (Zech 1:12).

¹⁵ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Daniel*, 143: "All three actions [fasting, sackcloth, and ash] are symbols of remorse and mourning in the Bible (e.g., Josh. 7:6; II Sam. 1:2; 3:31; Est. 4:1-3; Job 2:12; 42:6; Ezek. 27:30)."

to demonstrate humility and to posture himself appropriately before the mighty God of the Universe. And this will become clear why he's doing this when you see what he prays.

Look at **verse 4**.

⁴ *I prayed to the LORD my God*

Notice how personal Daniel is here—"The Lord! My God!" This is even more personal than you realize, because, for the first time in the book of **Daniel**, Daniel uses the Name of God, Yahweh. He did it in **verse 2**. He does it here in **verse 4**. And he does it six more times in this chapter (**Dan 9:2, 4, 8, 10, 13, 14 [2x], 20**).

That's pretty surprising, but keep in mind that roughly half of the book of **Daniel** is written in Aramaic (**Dan 2:4b–7:28**). And Yahweh (the Tetragrammaton YHWH) is never used in those Aramaic chapters.

But **Daniel 9** is written in Hebrew. And Daniel makes clear here that he's praying to Yahweh, the personal, covenant God of the Israelites. And Daniel calls Yahweh, "my God!"¹⁶

⁴ *I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome God,*

By the way, "O Lord" in the middle of **verse 4** isn't Yahweh in Hebrew. It's the Hebrew **אֲדֹנָי** (*adon*) which means "sovereign lord" or "master." And then Daniel uses the word for "fearsome" or "awesome," and then *Elohim*, which is the generic word for God. So, Daniel is stacking up terms here for the true God of the Universe. **Forget those lame deities of the Babylonians and the Medo-Persians. Those gods are fake gods.** Daniel's praying to the real God of the Universe.

*"O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love [חֶסֶד (*hesed*)] with those who love him and keep his commandments,"¹⁷*

Write this down as a second statement about Daniel's prayer. Daniel's prayer responds to Scripture. But also,

2) Daniel's prayer **begins** with **adoration** (Dan 9:3–4)

"Sovereign Lord!" "Great and awesome God!" "Covenant Keeping God."

What Daniel does here isn't that different from the Lord's prayer in **Matthew 6:9**: "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." It's adoration!

And it's not that different from Jesus's high-priestly prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you" (**John 17:1**). And it's not that different from some of Paul's prayers in the NT where Paul lifts high the name of the Lord before he ever prays anything else.

And I would just encourage you, church, in your times of prayer... before you ever ask God for something... before you ever petition him or supplicate or say, "Gimmee, gimmee, gimmee, God!" Before you do that, remind yourself how awesome God is. Say it out loud. Tell God how amazing he is. Thank him for all the things that he's done for you!

That's good S.O.P. for our times of prayer. We see this modeled in Scripture. We see this modeled by the prophet Daniel.

Notice what Daniel does next. Look at **verse 5**.

⁵ *we have sinned¹⁸ and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules.*

¹⁶ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Daniel*, 141: "There is a good reason why Daniel used the name YHWH in this particular chapter... it emphasizes God as the Keeper of the covenants. Since He had promised through Jeremiah that the Babylonian Captivity was to last for seventy years, it would be over soon. Daniel knew this because he had been brought to Babylon in the first deportation that took place in 605 B.C. It was now the year 539 B.C., so according to Daniel's calculations, the captivity would end in three years. Indeed, it did. However, there is a second way of dealing with the seventy years, and that is from 586 to 515 B.C. In 586 B.C., at the third deportation, Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed. In the year 515 B.C., the Temple was rebuilt. But Daniel's calculations pertained to what he had experienced himself. He was not counting from the years of the second or third deportations but from the beginning of the Babylonian Captivity in 605 B.C. Since that year, he estimated that the accomplishing of the desolations of Jerusalem had nearly been reached."

¹⁷ Daniel is not advocating for a works-based faith. Faith and love precede obedience. Jesus makes a similar statement in John 14:15: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

¹⁸ Miller, *Daniel*, NAC, 245: "The Hebrew verb *ḥāṭā* ('sinned') basically means 'to miss the mark.' For example, Judg 20:16 says that there were seven hundred Benjamite soldiers who 'could sling a stone at a hair and not miss [*ḥāṭā*]' the target. Ethically speaking, sin is missing God's mark or goal of holy living that is required for human beings. Israel as a nation had fallen short of God's design

Who's the "we"? Who's Daniel talking about here? Why the first-person plural?

Look at **verse 6**.

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.*¹⁹

What's interesting here is that Daniel is one of the few people in the OT who has no famous or recorded sins in the Bible.²⁰ **Moses had his smashing of the rock moment. Moses also killed an Egyptian. David had his Bathsheba moment. Abraham lied about his wife. Abraham also had his Hagar incident.**

But we don't have a moment like that in Daniel's life recorded in Scripture. Make no mistake—Daniel was a sinner! **All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God!** What's significant here is that Daniel isn't just confessing his own sin before the Lord... he's collectively... he's communally confessing the sins of his people.

"We've sinned." "We've done wrong." "We haven't listened to you, Lord." "We got ourselves into this mess. It's our fault." "And only you can get us out of it."

Write this down as a third statement about Daniel's prayer that we should emulate.

3) Daniel's prayer **includes confession** (Dan 9:5–14)²¹

Tell me if you've heard this before church. Tell me if this rings a bell: "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" (**Matt 6:12**).

Some of you may be familiar with the acronym A.C.T.S. that is used as a model for prayer. A-Adoration; C-Confession; T-Thanksgiving; S-Supplication. That model wasn't created out of thin air. We see these things displayed by people praying in Scripture. And Daniel is one of those.

And what's fascinating here is how Daniel takes on the corporate sins of his people. He says "we" and "our." Daniel didn't commit those sins! Not really! Daniel was just a boy when he was taken captive. He didn't have time to commit those sins and reject those prophets.

But he so closely associates with the sins of his people and the mistakes that his forebears have made that he can say, **"We've sinned. We've rebelled. We've ignored your torah, Lord."**²²

I would just say applicationally that confession is an essential part of our prayer times. There is a time for personal confession. And there is a time for corporate confession. We can and should confess the sins of our family, the sins of our church, the sins of our churches, and the sins of our country. Daniel did it. We should too. It's a great precursor to petition.

Look at **verse 7**.

⁷ *To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame,*²³

There's a little bit of adoration there mixed with confession. I love that!

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,*²⁴ *because of the*

to be a holy people."

¹⁹ Walvoord, *Daniel*, 256–7: "Even in such times of revival as the reign of Hezekiah, when the king's messengers went throughout the land calling people to the Passover at Jerusalem, many of the people 'laughed them to scorn and mocked them' (2 Chron. 30:10)."

²⁰ Walvoord, *Daniel*, 256: "Here began Daniel's prayer of confession. He himself is one of the few major characters of the Old Testament to whom some sin is not ascribed, though we know theologically he was not sinless. In the context of his prayer he was dealing not with his personal sins, but was identifying with Israel's sin and the collective responsibility he shared both in God's promises of blessing and warnings of divine judgment."

²¹ Walvoord, *Daniel*, 254: "Daniel recognized the need for confession of sin and national repentance as a prelude to restoration (Deut. 30:1–3; Jer. 29:10–14)."

²² Tanner, *Daniel*, 526: "According to Lev 26:40–41, this had to include the confession of their iniquity and covenant unfaithfulness, as well as that of their forefathers. Hence, Daniel's prayer in chap. 9 is a prayer of national repentance and confession as a precondition for God regathering his people to the land and restoring them to blessing."

²³ Miller, *Daniel*, NAC, 246: "The contrast between Yahweh and Israel is emphatic in the Hebrew, which reads, 'To you, O Lord, is the righteousness, but to us is shame of face.'"

²⁴ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Daniel*, 144: "At the time, the Jews were driven not only to Babylon but also to Assyria or Egypt. Wherever they went, they experienced humiliation."

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.

Daniel is not just laying it on thick here. He is actually grieved by this. He's emotionally pained by the failures of his people. He's crying out to the Lord while covered in ash and clothed in sackcloth. This is a lament for the sin of his people. This is heartfelt grief and sadness and sorrow over the failure of his people.

Look at **verse 9**.

⁹ To the Lord our God belong mercy²⁵ and forgiveness,²⁶ for we have rebelled against him¹⁰ 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.²⁷

Notice in your English Bibles, Daniel varies his usage of the words Lord, LORD, and God—in Hebrew, *Adonai*, *Yahweh*, and *Elohim*. These are words for Israel's God (among others) used throughout the OT.

Look at **verse 11**.

¹¹ All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath²⁸ that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him.

I mentioned earlier that the title of this message is "When Scripture Sends Us to Our Knees." And the primary Scripture that Daniel references is **Jeremiah 25:8–12**, and possibly also **Jeremiah 29:10**. But a secondary Scripture is referenced here too.²⁹

When Daniel says in **verse 11**,

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.

That's a reference to **Deuteronomy 28**.³⁰ That's a reference to the climactic moment in the Pentateuch when the Israelites were about to enter into the Promised Land.³¹ And the old man Moses gave them one final charge before he went up to Mount Nebo to die.

And the essence of Moses's message in **Deuteronomy 28** was this: **"If you obey and serve God, you'll be blessed. If you reject him, you'll be cursed."**³² This is what's referred to as the "Land Covenant" or the "Deuteronomic Covenant."³³

²⁵ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Daniel*, 144: "The rabbis used this statement to elaborate on the extent of God's compassion: 'They said that He is merciful, but He is more than merely merciful, For the Lord thy God is a merciful God (Deut. 4:31); the Lord is full of compassion and gracious (Ps. 103:8); The Lord is good to all (ibid. 145:9); To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness (Dan. 9:9).'"

²⁶ Walvoord, *Daniel*, 262: "Daniel understood that there is no contradiction between the righteousness of God and His mercy and forgiveness. The same Scriptures that predict God's judgment upon Israel also predict its restoration."

²⁷ Miller, *Daniel*, NAC, 245–6: "It is not clear from vv. 5–6 whether by 'commands and laws' Daniel was referring to Mosaic legislation or to instruction that either included or was the same as that which came from 'your servants the prophets' in v. 6. Although the term for 'laws' (*tôrôt*) is different in vv. 10–11, there Daniel referred explicitly to 'laws' God gave 'through his servants the prophets.' ... It is clear from vv. 11, 13, however, that Daniel also was thinking of the 'Law of Moses.' Therefore although Daniel referred to the penalties in the Mosaic law (see comments on vv. 11, 13), he considered Israel's sinful rebellion as against the totality of God's instruction in the Scriptures, which he viewed as speaking with one unified, divine voice."

²⁸ Miller, *Daniel*, NAC, 247: "'Curses' (*ālā*) is singular and definite in the Hebrew, indicating that a particular curse was in view. 'Sworn judgments' (*šēbu 'ā*) also is singular and definite in the Hebrew, showing that a particular 'sworn judgment' was intended."

²⁹ Miller, *Daniel*, NAC, 243: "Daniel's mind was filled with the Word of God, and this fact is reflected in his prayer, which contains many allusions to earlier Old Testament passages (particularly Deuteronomy, Solomon's prayer in 1 Kgs 8, and Jeremiah)."

³⁰ See also Leviticus 26 where similar ideas concerning blessings and curses are mentioned.

³¹ Miller, *Daniel*, NAC, 247: "In Deut 28:15ff. the contents of this curse are recorded. It included poor crops, infertility, disease, lack of rain, defeat before enemies, and the most terrible penalty of all, expulsion from the land of Canaan."

³² Tanner, *Daniel*, 526: "The whole experience of going into exile in Babylon was a fulfillment of the discipline that God had forewarned the nation of years earlier under Moses (see Deut 28–29). He promised to shower them with blessings if they obeyed his covenant (see Deut 28:1–14), but he also warned them that He would discipline them for covenant disobedience (Deut 28:15–68; cf. Lev 26:14–39)."

³³ "Mendenhall has shown that the Mosaic covenant has a close parallel to certain suzerainty treaties (i.e., treaties between a Great King and his vassals) of the Hittite Empire. Sanctions are typically supplied in these treaties by a series of blessings and cursings as also illustrated in Leviticus 26:14–39 and Deuteronomy 27. Such warnings are witnessed by heaven and earth (cf. Deut. 4:26 and Isa. 1:2) and in their form are similar to many passages in the Old Testament." [G. E. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the*

And sure enough, God meant what he said. The Israelites rejected God, and so God removed them from the land. He poured out judgment upon them.

And the reference to seventy years isn't just a random number. **2 Chronicles 36:20–21** says, “He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.”

God's law required Israel to let the land rest every seventh year as a Sabbath to the Lord (**Lev 25:1–7**). God also warned that if his people persisted in disobedience, he would remove them from the land so that it could enjoy the Sabbath rest they had denied it (**Lev 26:33–35, 43**). Since they failed to keep that covenant commitment, God says in judgment over them, “**I'm going to let the land rest seventy years.**” That's where Jeremiah's seventy years of captivity comes from. While the people were in exile, the land received its Sabbath rest.³⁴

Look at **verse 12** with me.

¹² He [i.e., **Yahweh**] has confirmed his words,

Wouldn't you know it! God said it, and he did it.

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 ready³⁵ 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.

You might have noticed here how Daniel's prayer pivots from first person to third person.³⁶ He went from primarily “us” and “our” to “he” and “him.” **And that's because this prayer isn't just a historical record. It's not just a personal interaction between Daniel and the Lord. This prayer is didactic. Daniel, empowered by the Holy Spirit, is teaching us some things about God and his Word even while he's praying!**

And this was instructive for the people in Daniel's day who read about this prayer. It was instructive later for the people in Israel who returned to the land. And it's instructive for us, 2,600 years later. This prayer teaches us about God. It teaches us about God's Word. It teaches us about a God who always keeps his promises, even when those promises involve judgment and calamity and exile!³⁷

Ancient Near East (Biblical Colloquium, 1955). For a more recent examination of the importance of these parallels to the dating of the Mosaic covenant, see K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 298–99]. Walvoord, *Daniel*, 259.

³⁴ “Hoehner notes, ‘The reason for Israel's captivity was their refusal to obey the Word of the Lord from the prophets (Jer. 29:17–19) and to give their land sabbatical rests (2 Chron. 36:21). God had stated that Israel, because of her disobedience, would be removed from her land and scattered among the Gentiles until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths (Lev. 26:33–35).’” [Harold W. Hoehner, “Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, Part 6: Daniel's Seventy Weeks and New Testament Chronology,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132, no. 1 (January–March 1975), 47–65]. Walvoord, *Daniel*, 252–3.

³⁵ Miller, *Daniel*, NAC, 248: “‘Did not hesitate to bring the disaster upon us’ [NIV] literally reads ‘watched [šāqad, ‘to watch or wake’] concerning [or ‘over’] the disaster and brought it upon us.’ The idea of God ‘watching’ or ‘waking’ concerning (or ‘over’) the disaster is difficult, but the meaning seems to be that Yahweh had kept the disaster ready (‘watched over’ it) in case Israel did not repent.”

³⁶ Walvoord, *Daniel*, 258: “The righteous God is also a God of mercy. It is on this ground that Daniel was basing his petition. In doing so, he turned from addressing God directly in the second person to speaking of God in the third person, as if to state a truth for all who would hear, a theological fact now being introduced as the basis for the remainder of the prayer.”

³⁷ Tanner, *Daniel*, 533–4: “Two important theological truths emerge from this section: (1) for those who have sinned, Yahweh is a God of restoration (though not necessarily eliminating the consequences of one's wrong choices); and (2) prayer is the proper pathway to unlocking his compassion and forgiveness. Daniel's sincere contrition before God in prayer not only fulfilled a need historically (Israel's regathering from exile), but it stands as a model to believers of all times of what it means to seek God in the midst of divine discipline... Although Daniel's prayer in Dan 9:3–19 is specifically a prayer of national confession in keeping with the principles of blessing, curse, and restoration found in the Pentateuch (Deut 28–30), nevertheless there are principles we can all learn from his prayer that are applicable to personal sin and confession. These principles could be outlined as:

1. One should approach God in humility and sincerity, being careful to revere him as “the great and awesome God,” a God to be taken seriously (9:3–4).

And that leads us to the final section of this prayer. That leads us to the finale. Write this down as the fourth and final statement about Daniel's prayer.

4) Daniel's prayer **ends** with **petition** (Dan 9:15–19)

Watch how Daniel ends this prayer.³⁸ Daniel ends rapid fire with petitions.

In Greek, you have something called the optative mood. It's a grammatical construction of a verb that indicates wish or desire. And prayers are often prayed in the optative mood. For example, Paul prays for the Thessalonians in **1 Thessalonians 5:23**, "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In Hebrew, there's no equivalent to the optative mood. Instead, writers use what are called imperatives when they express a wish or ask for something in prayer.

And these imperatives are really striking. Because imperatives are often used for commands. They are very punchy statements. So it's fascinating to see Daniel here "not commanding" the Lord per se in these verses... but asking strongly... he's petitioning and pleading aggressively before the Lord.

And the imperative form of the Hebrew verb shows up ten times in **verses 15–19**. **"Listen, Lord! Forgive, Lord! Open your eyes. Incline your ears. Pay attention. Act, Lord! Delay not!"**

The emotion is palpable here as Daniel brings out these imperatives with machine-gun fire. And what's striking about it is that he hasn't used one imperative in the first fourteen verses. Why would he? He's meditating on Scripture. He's praising God. He is confessing before God in those verses. He does that before he ever asks God for anything.

But then when he starts asking stuff of God, he lets it rip. And these last five verses are a barrage of petitions. Look at verse 15.

¹⁵ And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand,³⁹ and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

Here's a little more adoration and confession ramping up to the petition.

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.

In other words, **"Don't let your enemies get the satisfaction of seeing your holy city and your chosen people perpetually humiliated. Don't let them see your promises unfulfilled."**

By the way, Moses prayed something similar when the Israelites were rebelling against the Lord in the wilderness. God wanted to wipe them out. But Moses said, **"No, Lord! What will the people back in Egypt think if that happens? What will the other nations say? Your name will be defamed! Don't let that happen!"** (see **Exod 32:11–14; Num 14:13–19**). **Daniel learned from Moses how to pray. And we learn from Daniel and Moses how to pray.**

Look at **verse 17**.

¹⁷ Now therefore, O our God,

2. There must be an acknowledgment on our part that we are wrong—we have not merely made a mistake, but we have sinned in disobeying the will of God (9:5).

3. There should be an acknowledgment that though God had revealed his will to us, we are guilty of rejecting his counsel (9:6).

4. We should accept the fact and take responsibility for our sin by acknowledging that sin always has a price, and whatever consequences we suffer are simply what we deserve (9:7–11a).

5. We should admit that God's Word is right, and divine discipline is what we should expect from a God who is true to his Word—rather than using confession as a tool by which we hope to escape the consequences of our infidelity (9:11b–13).

6. Never should we blame God for any suffering we incur when under discipline or allow ourselves to be embittered against him (9:14). Only out of immaturity would we ever say, "O God, how could you allow this to happen to me?"

³⁸ Walvoord, *Daniel*, 261–2: "Interestingly, in verses 15–19, Daniel addressed God only as *Adonai* and *Elohim* and no longer used His covenant name, *Yahweh*, as he did in verses 4–14... The explanation seems to be that in using the word *Adonai*, Daniel was recognizing God's absolute sovereignty over him as Lord."

³⁹ Daniel echoes the language of Joshua 24:17: "[F]or it is the LORD our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed."

“In light of your promises... in light of the fact that there are people watching... in light of the fact that you are a faithful and righteous God, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness...”

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.

The “sanctuary” is a reference to the temple. The temple is in ruins. Nebuchadnezzar plundered it and razed it to the ground roughly seventy years before this.

¹⁸ *O my God, incline your ear⁴⁰ and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations,*

“The city is in ruins. The temple is in ruins. Judah is in ruins. The people are in exile.”

Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name.

“Look on Jerusalem, Lord! This is not the way it’s supposed to be. Jerusalem was supposed to be a place of prayer and a city called by your name.”

And then look at the middle of **verse 18**. This is probably the most important statement that Daniel makes in this prayer. And it’s the statement that most immediately relates to both OT and NT believers. **We pray this prayer verbatim as NT Christians.**

For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness,

We, as NT Christians, do not approach the throne of grace with confidence on the basis of what we have done, but on the basis of what Christ has done for us. We don’t present our petitions to God because of our righteousness, but because of his righteousness.

For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy.

Look at **verse 19**. Here comes a massive barrage of imperatives. **It’s like the end of a fireworks show where all the fireworks are being shot up and exploding at the same time.**

¹⁹ *O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act.*

The gall of Daniel! Who talks to God like this?

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

In other words, **“Defend your honor, Lord! Defend your name! Fulfill your promises. Send your people back to Jerusalem in fulfillment of your Word and the promises in the book of Jeremiah!”** That’s what Daniel is praying here. That’s his petition.

Notice, he’s not praying for a Cadillac. He’s not praying for his best life now. He’s not praying for a financial windfall. He’s not praying for health, wealth, and prosperity. He’s praying God’s Word back to God.

He’s praying that God will fulfill what he said. He’s praying, if I can go NT with you for a second... He’s praying for God’s will to be done. **John 15:7** says, “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” **John 14:13–14** says likewise, “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”

Can we pray like this, church? Can we pray strong petitionary prayers like Daniel does in Daniel 9:15–19? Yes, we can. But if you start praying petitionary prayers for a Cadillac...or for health and wealth and prosperity and comfort... if you do that, don’t be surprised if your prayers go unanswered. Those prayers might as well be bouncing off the ceiling and coming back to you.

Now let me ask you this. Let’s get back to Daniel in **Daniel 9**. Did Daniel’s prayer get answered? Did God listen, hear, see, forgive, and act? Did he return his people to the Promised Land?

Yes, he did.⁴¹ Let me say two things about that. Yes, the people returned. **Ezra 1:1–4** says as follows,

¹*In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: ²“Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house*

⁴⁰ Miller, *Daniel*, NAC, 249: “The picture is of a person bending the ear in order to hear more clearly. God was being asked to listen intently to the prophet’s prayer (and possibly also to the insulting words being spoken about Yahweh by the heathen).”

⁴¹ Miller, *Daniel*, NAC, 242: “This passage illustrates that Daniel believed in the reality of predictive prophecy. Jeremiah had foretold the end of the exilic period seventy years in advance, and Daniel fully expected this prophecy to be fulfilled. Neither did Daniel ‘symbolize’ these seventy years but took the prophecy literally. This is the safest procedure for believers today as they study prophecies of future events.”

at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. ³Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem. ⁴And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.”⁴²

The timing of this event is curious. The first year of Cyrus king of Persia is probably the same time as the first year of King Darius the Mede. There is some historical evidence that suggests that Cyrus made Darius (Gubaru) the king over the Chaldeans, but he was subordinate to King Cyrus in Persia.⁴³

The other historical possibility is that Cyrus and Darius are the same person.⁴⁴ I think that’s plausible, because Darius could actually be a title like “Pharaoh,” not a proper name. However you put that together historically, the timing of this edict from Cyrus in Persia coincides historically with Daniel’s prayer in **Daniel 9**. So even as Daniel was praying, God was already moving behind the scenes to bring the Israelites back to Jerusalem.

And Daniel lived long enough to see this. In **Daniel 10**, the first statement is that Daniel had a vision from the Lord during the *third* year of King Cyrus’s reign. So, in his *first* year, King Cyrus made a proclamation that the Israelites would return from exile. In King Cyrus’s *third* year, Daniel had a vision. Ergo, Daniel lived long enough to see the seventy years of Jeremiah’s prophecy fulfilled. And his prayer was answered.

Now Daniel probably didn’t return with the Israelites to Jerusalem. Remember Daniel’s an old man. That’s a long trip from Babylon to Jerusalem for an octogenarian!⁴⁵ Daniel probably didn’t return to Jerusalem. But he lived long enough to see his people return.⁴⁶

But here’s the really fascinating thing. After Daniel’s amazing prayer, God sends the angel Gabriel to come talk to Daniel. And Gabriel’s going to reveal some amazing things to Daniel. And what Gabriel reveals is only *tangentially* connected to the Israelites returning to Jerusalem. It’s like Gabriel shows up and says, “**Yeah, yeah, I know you’re praying about the Israelites returning to Jerusalem. That’s great. But God’s got some bigger fish to fry. Let me tell you about that!**”⁴⁷

“**You’re worried about the seventy years, Daniel. Let me tell you about the seventy weeks of years!**”⁴⁸ And Daniel’s going to get probably the most amazing prophecy ever recorded in the OT concerning

⁴² So also 2 Chronicles 36:22–23, “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: ‘Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up.’”

⁴³ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Daniel*, 141: “The Persian accounts of Babylon’s conquest refer to the Darius of Daniel 9 as Gubaru. He was of the seed of the Medes, while his ally, Cyrus, was Persian. Darius/Gubaru was made king of the Chaldean province of Babylon, while Cyrus was crowned king of the entire Medo-Persian Empire.”

⁴⁴ Miller, *Daniel*, NAC, 240: “Darius the Mede (probably an alternative title for Cyrus) is described as the son of ‘Xerxes,’ better rendered ‘Ahasuerus’ (so KJV, NRSV, NASB). Ahasuerus is an approximation of the Hebrew, which in turn is an approximation of the Persian term. ‘Xerxes’ is the Greek name. Like Darius, Ahasuerus probably was a title, not a personal name.”

⁴⁵ Miller, *Daniel*, NAC, 240: “The events of this chapter transpired approximately twelve years after Daniel’s second vision recorded in chap. 8. If taken captive about age fifteen in 605 B.C., he would have been over eighty years of age in 538 B.C.”

⁴⁶ Walvoord, *Daniel*, 251: “Daniel was probably too old and infirm to return to Jerusalem himself, but he had lived long enough to see the first expedition of pilgrims return. This occurred in ‘the first year of Cyrus king of Persia’ (Ezra 1:1), and Daniel lived at least until ‘the third year of Cyrus king of Persia’ (Dan. 10:1) and possibly some years longer.”

⁴⁷ Tanner, *Daniel*, 520: “Daniel’s prayer in this chapter focuses upon God’s deliverance of the nation from exile. In response, God reveals amazing details of the nation’s future, looking beyond the near-term deliverance from exile to the arrival of Messiah and finally to the completion of the nation’s desolations by the antichrist.”

⁴⁸ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Daniel*, 140 overstates the case when he says about Daniel: “What he misunderstood was the chronology of prophetic events. After reading the prophecies of Jeremiah, Isaiah, and perhaps others, he thought that the Messianic kingdom would be set up following the seventy years of captivity. He also knew from these prophets that the prerequisite for the establishment of the kingdom would be Israel’s confession of her sins. Hence, assuming that the Babylonian Captivity would be immediately followed by the Messianic kingdom, Daniel offered a prayer of confession for Israel’s sins in verses 3-19. In verses 20-23, Gabriel was sent to correct Daniel’s misunderstanding. The angel revealed to Daniel the program of God, which would bring in the

the Messiah—**Daniel 9:20–27**. It’s utterly amazing. And I’m going to tell you all about it... next week. Y’all come back now.

Can we pray together as we close? I’m going to do something in my prayer right now, and I want to invite you to join me. I’m going to pray *adoration*. I’m going to pray *confession*. And then, I’m going to pray *petition*. Let’s emulate Daniel’s prayer now. Pray with me.

kingdom. In a play on words, Gabriel informed Daniel that it was not going to be seventy years but seventy-sevens of years before the kingdom would be established (vv. 24-27).” Similarly he writes in 142, “Throughout chapter 9, Daniel acted as if the kingdom was about to be established. The fulfillment of God’s Word is contingent upon prayer, so Daniel prayed (vv. 3-19). The confession of national sin is a prerequisite for the establishment of the kingdom (Lev. 26:40-42; Jer. 3:11-18; Hos. 5:15), so he confessed national sin (9:3-14). Then he pleaded for mercy (vv. 15-19).”