

Communion Service - Daniel's Prayer

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Preacher: Reverend Mark Macleod

[0 : 00] Let's turn back to the Bible. One of the many things about the Bible is that as a book it's a very varied book.

For example, some of the Bible, the genre of it, if you like, is poetry. It's a poetic material. In the Bible you've got things like prophecy as well, so different kinds of prophecies. You've got theological argumentation as well, especially if you look at the epistles in the New Testament, quite technical language in some of the epistles that are written in the New Testament.

But you also have narratives. And you have quite a lot of narratives actually. And because you have a lot of narratives you also come across a lot of different characters in the Bible as well.

And looking at character in us, it's always fascinating looking at characters. Because we can relate to character. We can see a lot of things that link us to these characters.

One of the things that can be quite encouraging to us is the fact that for many of these characters many of the characters that we see really right throughout the Bible they're by no means perfect are they?

[1 : 24] by no means but when you think of some of the main ones think of Abraham and Moses and David and Peter there's so many different ones and these particular individuals that I mentioned there, they were men of faith absolutely men of faith but they fell all of them soon sometimes and they seemed in quite terrible ways we can see much of ourselves in these people we can link to the hands perhaps especially in the failure but there are certain characters in the word of God there's not many of them granted but there are a few and we don't really read anything negative about them at all so Daniel is one example of that you read a lot about Daniel but we don't really read of any failures we don't really read of much by way of this sin now Daniel himself he's a sinner like everybody else and he's not any different but just from what's recorded for us in the word of God there's very little by way of his failures there's very little by way of sin comes across certainly as an exceptionally holy man indeed

Daniel he lived through a very tough time in Israel's history Israel had fallen into idolatry this was a problem that they had time and time again falling into that idolatry they kept falling into idolatry but God disguised them for that God judged them as a result of this idolatry that they kept falling into and what God did was he gave them over to their enemy and the particular enemy at this time was the enemy of Babylon and Babylon comes and Babylon conquers Judah and what they do is they take some of the Israelites captive and they first of all take some of the talented people some of the talented young men and Daniel was part of that group and they come and they take Daniel into exile in Babylon and one of the reasons for taking the talented young men into Babylon was they wanted to really

I suppose brainwash them they wanted to indoctrinate them into the Babylonian culture they wanted to indoctrinate them very much into the Babylonian mindset the Babylonian way of doing things and that's I suppose similar in a way to what's going on today in their own culture there's a lot of similarities there you think about those who are authority some of the people in government there very much is this idea of trying to control the young people of our own nature and perhaps you can talk to them ideologies which we very much disagree with and funnily enough some of those ideologies are actually very similar to the Babylonian ideologies as a sort of intersection between the two so there's nothing here under the sun so Daniel here he's been taken out of Judah taken to Babylon and taken every time and go to make a thing the way the Babylonians did but Daniel's faith amazingly stands for throughout that whole period throughout that whole period of exile this faith remains strong he doesn't come into the agenda of the Babylonian all to turn away from the Lord not only does this faith stand for and faith stronger and faith actually grows as he defined himself in the exile during that period and one of the ways that you see this strength of faith is in his

prayer life he's in a very real way a man of prayer we use that phrase by the Lord someone's a man of prayer someone's a woman of prayer Daniel really was he was very much a man of prayer and he had a set pattern many of you will know the set pattern he had three times during the day where he had set aside specifically for prayer that's not to say that he didn't pray more than that he probably did but he had three specific times that he would come aside and he would pray and even when there was that decree remember that decree that went out where the king basically said nobody's allowed to pray anymore nobody's allowed to pray to anyone other than me basically but Daniel didn't comply with that even though there was a law against he continued and that led to him being thrown into that den of liars so he was a man of prayer and here in this passage here in Daniel chapter 9 you get a real insight into one of Daniel's prayers and that's really what I want to spend the rest of our time looking at this remarkable prayer it's quite something really to get an insight into someone's private prayer you know we often hear public prayer you know at prayer meetings and things like that we're used to hear the people's public prayer but the private prayers did there's an intimacy about private prayer something very personal something between you and God and I don't think any of us yet want others to hear pride and prayers for the Lord it's very intimate thing but in God's sovereignty and God's plan here in this passage we get just that we become like a fly on the wall here fly on the wall as we hear this remarkable prayer of Darion the first thing I want to look at I will move on to the prayer in a moment but before I do that the first thing I want to look at is the motivation for him what is it that actually motivates

[7 : 31] Daniel to please what's the reason that he comes and what's the reason that he actually starts through and if you look in verse 1 there verse 1 in the first year of Darius the son of Azurus of the lineage of the Greeks who was made king over the realm of the Calvians in the first year of Israel 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 dates are very important in the Bible and when God gives us dates he usually gives us these dates for a reason and here in this passage we read that this was the first year of Darius why is that important that's important because Darius is not a Babylonian Darius is a me and that's incredibly important because that indicates to us that the time of Babylonian dominance was on the way in the time of

Babylonian dominance was on the way out so there's a massive power shift here a huge power shift in the empire and we read in verse 2 that Daniel was actually reading Jeremiah so not only was Daniel a man of prayer but he's a man of the word and he's reading Jeremiah and Jeremiah prophesies that Babylon would dominate for 70 years Jeremiah prophesies that Babylon would be dominant for 70 years but that dominance would come to an end and that when that dominance was going to come to an end then Israel itself was going to be restored so by logic if Babylon is falling if Babylon is falling then that means that the restoration of Israel therefore must be imminent the restoration of Israel must just be around the corner and that becomes a motivation for Daniel here to put up this prayer of restoration and that's a tremendous example actually of what it means to pray the will of God so here

Daniel's reading God's word and he reads through Jeremiah that this time of Babylonian dominance would end and then Israel would be restored and he sees that so therefore he prays it and he comes and he prays for that very thing now I know that's quite subtle but it's an important lesson very important lesson indeed God has said there will be restoration but Daniel doesn't just sit in his hands and just wait for that restoration to happen that's not what he does if he reads that this restoration is going to happen he prays for it he comes and he pleads with the Lord asking that's very important to remember that when it comes to prayer that's what we're doing in prayer in prayer you're pleading with the Lord for the Lord to fulfill what he has said he would do prayer is pleading and the very promises of God so just I suppose by way of example he promises us mercy so he promises the

Lord feet of mercy and he promises the Lord for forgiveness does that mean that we just sit there and wait for that forgiveness and wait for that mercy that's not the case we ask for it if we go to the Lord and we plead with the Lord and we ask for that forgiveness and for that mercy just if the promise is there doesn't mean we don't ask for it we absolutely come and when we do come seeking his mercy and when we do come seeking that forgiveness of the Lord we know that we have it because he promises we give it for us so in other words it's not that we're pleading for these things wondering if the Lord's going to be gracious and wondering if the Lord's going to be merciful

we come because we have the assurance that he will we have the assurance that he absolutely will forgive us to you and Daniel is pleading here for God to do what God has already promised that he would do that's exactly what our prayers need to be pleading and for God to fulfill what he has already promised we are to plead the promises of God so that basically means we are to pray the word of God that's all the lessons here we are to pray the word of God that doesn't necessarily mean that when we pray let me just merely reel off quotations of scripture as in that's all our prayers are that's not what I mean by praying the word of God what I mean by praying the word of God is that prayers are guided and influenced and directed by the word that's what we see here with Daniel it's not that he's just merely quoting scripture all the way through but what you see is he's using the promises he's reading he's seeing the promises in scripture and then he's using that as a reason and a motivation to do prayers that's his motivation reading Jeremiah comes across the promise of restoration and he asks for that he pleads for that very thing that's the first thing

[13:06] I want to move on now to look at the prayer itself and we're going to look at very briefly three things in the prayer it's essentially three parts of the structure of the prayer we're going to look at adoration confession and request those three things adoration confession and then request and that's basically the way Daniel's structure this prayer and he structures in this threefold way adoration confession and request now structure is I think a very helpful thing in prayer I suppose structure is most things in life really but it's very good for prayer it's good to have a kind of structure in life you don't have to be rigid with structure sometimes that can be unhelpful but we're trying to be very rigid but structure helps and here Daniel he's very much got a structure and the structure begins with adoration and by the word adoration

I simply mean directly glorifying the name of the Lord pointing to the Lord's greatness pointing to his holiness pointing very much to his glory and you read in verse 4 at the beginning of the prayer and it begins here with adoration O Lord great and awesome God who keeps his covenant and mercy with those who love him and with those who keep his commandments O Lord great and awesome God who keeps his covenant and mercy that's where Daniel begins that's where this prayer begins very much pointing to the greatness of God that's how our prayer should be that's how we should start our prayer you know depending on our situation whatever it is we're going through at any one given time the emphasis of our prayers are always going to change so for example one particular occasion the emphasis of your prayer might be thanksgiving because you're particularly thankful about something thanksgiving takes up the biggest part of the prayer other times like it is the case here in this passage the main emphasis of the prayer might be confession of sin but no matter what the emphasis is no matter what the main aim of your prayer is it should always begin with you pointing very much to the glory and to the greatness of God there's different reasons for that first the obvious reason is it's glorifying the God it's glorifying the God when we point to his greatness when we point to his majesty when we speak of his mercy and grace that's glorifying the Lord loves and to hear that that's really the first reason we should do it but it also helps ourselves as well it helps us when we come with our spirit and prayer of adoration and it helps us because it reminds us of who it is we come for and we need that mercy see when you come and you speak of the Lord's holiness when you come and speak of the Lord's mercy and his greatness and his majesty that gets you into the spirit of prayer it gets you into the spirit of reverence it helps you to remember it helps you to realize and to remember who it is that you actually come before and the reason that's important is because it's actually possible

I know this might sound strange but it's actually possible to lose sight of God times to our prayer and those who are the Lord's people you might know what I mean by that it's possible to get almost so lost in prayer that we end up just speaking to ourselves it's like we lose sight of God but what if it's humbling and prayer perhaps we're speaking to others more than we're speaking to the Lord and we say that's not good is it that's not good but by beginning our prayer glorifying God and by beginning our prayer very much pointing to the majesty and the wonder of who God is that helps focus our minds on who it is we come before and that gives focus very much to our prayers in general so that's what Daniel does here he begins with adoration the second part of the prayer and this is by far the largest chapter of the prayer it's about confession he does adoration and then he moves on to confession confession of sin and you get a flavor for it there in verse 5 and 6 so he takes a bit of this confession of sin he says we have sinned and committed iniquity we have done wickedly and rebelled even by departing from your precepts and your judgment and neither have

we heeded your servants and prophets who spoke in your name to our kings and our kings to our fathers and to all the people of the land and the rest of the prayer continues that same genital so you have confession of sin there that should really naturally flow from the words of adoration it should there's a kind of logical sequence to it isn't it because when you are starting your journey when you're pointing to the glory of God when you're pointing out his majesty when you're pointing out holiness of his name you cannot but then see your own sin it's impossible not to and you become aware of your own sinfulness and you very much become aware of your own lack of holiness as well and the natural reaction is to confess it you come in adoration and it almost drives you to confession if you're coming in adoration it's going to do that that's exactly what happens here with Daniel and that's very much something that you want to be thinking about as a congregation just now and by way of preparing yourself to sit at the Lord's supper seeing your own sin being aware of your own sin being aware of your own failure and coming in repentance confessing coming in confession before the Lord himself that's incredibly liberating to do that amazingly liberating to do that because we know that when we come in confession we're coming before one who's able to take our sin away we're coming before one who's able to take that guilt and to remove it from us it's a wonderful thing to come it's a wonderful thing to confess our sin before the Lord and to repent I remember a story came to my head there I remember in a fellowship one time there was a man there talking about what I think someone asked the question what will you miss in heaven something like that what will you miss in heaven and there was this man I didn't think he missed anything but this man said I'll miss the joy of repentance I thought I'm not sure I agree with that but you can see where he's coming from the joy of coming and the joy of coming and repenting before the Lord and receiving the forgiveness of the Lord that's very much something we need to do as you approach the table of the Lord as you seek to make preparation for yourselves our natural sinful pride wants to ignore our sins our natural sinful pride wants to ignore our wrong doing that's how it works pride doesn't want to confess pride never wants to confess the wrong doing never that's what the Lord asks us to do to come confessing our iniquity and to come confessing our sin and it's good for us to do that it's good because when we do that we actually then see more of the glory of [21 : 39] Christ the more you come repentant and confessing your sin the more aware you become of the extent of what Christ has actually done for the cross so both those things very much come hand in hand see if you just ignore your sin if you ignore your sin as one of the Lord's people and we can't do that if you do that you're really excited the glory of the cross and the glory of Christ because sit at the table and you can handle the elements and you can handle the bread and the wine and you take these things when you ignore your sin you don't really appreciate what this Christ has done but when you become confessing when you become aware of your sin and then you come and you handle the elements and you take the bread and the wine you very much become aware of the extent that the Lord Jesus Christ has built for us it's positive to focus on sin not negative do many Christians think it's negative to do that it's negative to only focus on sin but it's not negative to by way of preparation to focus on sin because the more you see of your sin you confess it and you repent the more you see the glory of the

Lord Jesus that's one of the reasons why the Lord continues to convict us of our sin so that we do not forget you see conviction it's not just for when you're being converted sometimes we think conviction of sin and repentance that these things are only valid for when we're being converted and when we get past that phase of being converted that we don't need these things anymore but that's not the case the life of the Christian must be a life marked by repentance confessing her of sin so God he continues and allowed the Christian lives to convict us and he continues to highlight every liquidity he continues to do that in lots of different ways and he does that in order that we might repent in order that we might keep on turning to it and the more we do that the more we do it I will understand of the sheer extent of what it is about the Lord and Savior and Jesus and Christ and the Lord so be careful be very very careful of ignoring your sin especially when God is pointing out because he does that at certain times whether it be through the reading whether it be through the teaching of the word whether it be through a quiet word a loving word from a Christian as well our sister and the Lord he warns us about sin and he tries to highlight our sins in different ways and make sure that we don't ignore them make sure you won't turn a blind eye to sin it's easy to do that as the Lord's people very easy to turn a blind eye to our sin and it's interesting here in this prayer Daniel he speaks of Israel doing just that he's speaking of Israel actually ignoring the warnings of

God see that in verse 6 he says we've not heeded your servants the prophets in other words you sent the prophets

God and they came to you to warn us and to highlight our sins but we ignored them we haven't listened to them at all and then in verse 13 he says 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 all this has happened to us and we haven't turned he's trying to warn us God but we haven't turned we haven't turned and we haven't come to you in prayer and we haven't come confessing our sins so God he's chastising Israel here because of their idol they ignore them don't come to God and pray about yes Daniel is praying but they say it wasn't a nation they were they were turning a blind eye to God pointing to them and saying watch this sin in your life it wasn't being pointed out it wasn't coming the warning was there but they chose not to acknowledge to ignore warning we have to make sure that we don't do that and you ask yourself today have I repented of myself have I repented of my sin today this is

God highlighting or pointing out sins in my life which I am trying to find blind eye to and ignore and I'm not taking it before them I'm not taking it before them and confess is it that I'm ignoring the warnings from the word is it that I'm ignoring the warnings from preaching or from friends am I ignoring these things am I refusing to take them before the Lord ask yourself these questions the important questions to actually ask by the way of the revelation because as I said earlier the more you see yourself the more you confess the more you repent of yourself the more the glory and the love of the Lord Jesus has a simple equation the Lord will be of sin the Lord will be of Christ is from the more you see of your sin the more glorious you see the extent of the love and

[27 : 29] Christ will be of another interesting thing I think in this section of confession of sin is that Daniel is using the plural of he is so for example he's not just praying to himself he's praying to his sin so you've got not I have sinned and I have done wickedly you've got we have sinned we have done wickedly and I think that corporate element of confession is important as well now yes primarily what's most important is the question of I have sinned but I'm saying as well as that the corporate element is important too we are a body of believer that we are a body of the Lord's people and it's right to come together properly confessing our sin we have sinned God that's what we do in worship we were singing earlier on in the psalm we're coming and we have sinned that's important in terms of communion time as well because remember when you're sitting there at the table it's not just about you and relationship with God that's of course important that's not all it is it's not just you and God it's you and God and it's your brother's and sister and the Lord it's a communal thing and that communal aspect of it's important and we can't be side of that but we are all in this together we're all sinners

I know we perhaps all feel like we're the worst sinner but we are all sinners every one of us and we all need the mercy of God and as we come we come in that corporate way as well we have sinned we oh Lord are in need of your help we oh Lord are in need of your strength and I want to read that point just for you thanks for all so once the confession of sin is made Daniel then moves to the last point the last point is request request so he had his adoration then he had his confession of sin which was quite lengthy and then he comes with his request and the heart of the request it doesn't really come until much later on in the prayer down in verse 19 or 16 that's the essence of the request here we read there oh Lord according to all your righteousness I pray let your anger and your fury be turned away from your city

Jerusalem so he's praying for restoration that's what he's asking for he's asking for restoration he's asking for the Lord's wrath fury to be turned away and why is he asking what's the basis for all this asking is he asking that based on the merits of the people he's saying turn your fury away because of the merits of the people he's saying turn your fury away because of any inherent value of goodness in the people of Israel he's saying turn your wrath away for our sake well that's not what he's saying that's very different to what we find here he's coming and he's asking these things and he's praying for these things and because of the Lord's glory and goodness in the verse 19 oh Lord hear oh Lord oh Lord listen and act do not delay for your own sake well not our worship but for your sake for your glory not for our righteousness but he says for your righteousness for your city your people your name it's the language that you see there so he's asking for this because of the glory of God he's asking for them to be restored not for their sake he's asking for this restoration for the glory of God and I think that's important and that should always be about motivation always when we are asking for revival and we are asking for restoration you have to ask yourself why are we

asking that is it for the glory of our denomination is it for the glory of the church is it for the glory of our congregation and that's the case of something wrong something very wrong we should be asking for that restoration and asking for that reviving power of the Lord for the sake of God's glory God's glory absolutely has to be under God that's what Daniel says this is all for your glory for your righteousness for your name because of who you are he's he's he's he's he says make your anger and your fury be turned away the logic of a theology is quite straightforward in many ways by the something some of the logic is not so straightforward but the essence of the logic of theology is very straightforward where there is sin where there is sin there must therefore be the just wrath of God that's a simple logic simple equation where there is sin there must be the just wrath of God but God is merciful as well he's just yes he's also merciful and he provides a way for the face of the Lord in judgment and wrath to be turned away and the only way that the face of

God can be turned away in judgment and wrath is if it is turned towards someone else we're not asking for or Daniel isn't asking for the Lord's judgment and wrath to disappear because that can't happen that's impossible it has to be turned away it has to be directed we're asking for it here to be turned away or Daniel is asking for it to be turned away from the people but to be turned away from the people it needs to face somewhere and that's what Calvary is all about that's what the cross is all about that's why there needs to be the cross that's why Christ had to come at Calvary what's happening is the judgment and the wrath of God which was very much facing us facing the Lord's people it is turned and it is turned onto Christ that's what's happening he's enduring the face of God's just wrath he's enduring that judgment so that we can have that's what turning is we're so used to that picture of turning away from wrath it's not just a case of turning away from the son the wrath is turned upon to the

[34 : 04] Lord Jesus Christ Daniel knows that God is a just God he knows that and he also knows that God is merciful he knows that otherwise he wouldn't say turn your wrath away the very fact that he said turn your wrath away that shows us that he knows that God is a God who will turn away his wrath and the reason Daniel knows that is because of the Old Testament sacrificial system the whole sacrificial system teaches him wrath can be turned aside that's basically what it's all about wrath can be turned aside that's the sacrifices are all about wrath can be turned aside and he comes and he says God turn your wrath turn from your wrath turn from your fume and we know that too we who are the Lord New Testament period we know God is merciful as well but we see that and we experience that in a way that's far clearer than

Daniel that because people keep it up to light and looking at the Old Testament sacrificial system and seeing all these things and seeing the picture of wrath in the situation but we see it in Christ we experience it in Christ and we see Calvary if God willing remember it as you take of the supper in a few days time you remember these things and that's where you see the wonderful picture of the mercy the grace the forgiveness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ so as you make your way to the supper of this Lord's day then approach it with the spirit that we see here the spirit of Daniel's prayer and approach it with adoration in terms of giving glory to the Lord approach it very much with confession of sin examine yourself on that approach it with confessing with sin and also seeking that spiritual restoration that restoration that can only come through what our Lord and Saviour did in the cross that's the means by which his wrath is turned from us and that's

God willing and what we'll seek to remember as he comes to the Lord's and the children and this and the Lord's so may these thoughts help in preparation for the license of God willing to the heavenly Father a heavenly Father are we here thanks that you are yes a God who is a God a God who shows us our sin a God who convicts so many difficulties but you are also a God who is merciful and compassionate and loving and gracious that you are a God who turns your face from us that you turn the judgment and the wrath that should be upon us and you turn that on your own son and your only God the Lord Jesus Christ an order that you might now shine your face upon us in blessing and in fellowship and may that be the case here in the congregation and may you help them to prepare in a right manner as they seek to approach the table of the Lord and this the Lord's that cleanses us from our sins we ask we ask it all in the middle of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Amen war