

Daniel 9:1-23 – Praying in the promises of God

18 October 2020

- **Introduction**

- I wonder what we think is happening when we pray – someone leading a service will say 'let us pray' and so we do what do we do?
- Are we natural pray-ers, or do we find it difficult
- Do we struggle to get down to prayer and if we do, do we end up with a shopping list of 'please God may I have'
- Another big question is, whatever we think is happening when we pray, to whom or to what do we pray.
- Quote from former English cricket captain, Mike Gatting, 'I believe in a bit of everything – God, the supernatural, ghosts, superstitions, UFOs. I like to keep my options open!' – this is a typical view of many people
- When there is a national disaster, or issue, or tragedy, so often those in the media or politics (especially in the US perhaps?) so 'we are praying' for such and such, the situation in which we find ourselves etc..etc..
- Daniel doesn't hedge his bets – he doesn't pray generally, or to a pantheon of gods –

lets include Dagon, the god of the Medes
..... just in case

- **Point 1 – Turn to the Lord**

- Firstly Daniel turns to the Lord
- V3 - So I [Daniel] turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.
- This is wholehearted and complete – not just window dressing.
- V2 – gives us a clue to his motive and God prompt – ‘in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years
- Daniel turned to the Lord because he was reading the scriptures!
- Ronald Wallace – ‘for the whole community in Babylon it was the books that kept their tradition, theology and worship whole alive and faithful. They had no temple.Their main inspiration came from reading studying and interpreting the Holy Scriptures
- The scriptures orientate Daniel towards God and give him confidence to pray
- We can do likewise! – it is where we also are going to find the Lord!

- **Point 2 – Confess the mess**

- Daniel then describes and confesses the mess
- V4 - I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed:
 - Israel is in a mess
 - Daniel actually is not the person who is messed up but he stands in the place of Israel and confesses corporate sin and guilt
 - Daniel's confession is 'vicarious' – that is 'acting or done for another' Incidentally where the expression 'vicar' comes from – to describe a minister – someone who stands between the people for whom he has responsibility and God and intercedes for them - Vicar derives from the Latin "vicarius" meaning a substitute
 - Daniel's prayer is a 'we' prayer and not an 'I' prayer – just as the Lord's Prayer is a 'we/us' prayer
 - We are to be alert to our own 'rebellious complicity' (per quote from Tim Meadowcroft)
 - Daniel's plea for mercy is grounded in the character of God as both loving and covenant-making so
- **Point 3 -Recognition of God's righteousness and our own unworthiness**
 - Daniel recognises God's righteousness and Israel's unworthiness

- V7 - 'Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame
- God is a righteous God who upholds his honour
- In the words of an exam question, "compare and contrast" God with Israel!
- **Point 4 – Recognition of God's judgment**
 - And so Israel deserves what they are getting!
 - V11 - 11 All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you.
 - Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you
 - Daniel has accepted that his people, Israel, has failed to see the warning signs of God's displeasure
 - So, the outcome will be deserved punishment
- **Point 5 – Petition for forgiveness**
 - And so Daniel pleads/petitions for God's forgiveness on behalf of his nation
 - V17-19 Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favour on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not

make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.'

- Whilst recognising the plight of Israel and their deserved punishment, Daniel has the boldness to seek forgiveness – not for himself, but for his people – a vicarious act!
- You see when God makes a covenant, he does not turn his back on it – God will not disown his people, either in the time of Daniel Or throughout the scriptures..... as this is completed in the ultimate expression of the covenant in Jesus life death and resurrection – the cross is the ultimate symbol of that covenantal relationship.
- **Point 6 – And so God responds ...**
 - And so God responds to Daniel's prayer
 - v20 -23 While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the Lord my God for his holy hill – while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. He instructed me and said to me, 'Daniel, I

have now come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray, a word went out, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed.

- God responds!

- **Application**

- Let's get the order right!
- Today we are:
 - alert to the voice of God in our contemporary events
 - called to identify wholeheartedly with the people to whom God calls us
 - to repent with them and for them
 - to trust in the unending covenant loyalty of God
- John Stott quote - If we keep praise and petition together, benediction and petition then we maintain our spiritual equilibrium
- Final thought from Ronald Wallace – 'Our own belief about prayer is determined by our own belief about God.... If our relationship with him is to be ultimately satisfying and lasting, we have to anchor ourselves in his eternal and unchangeable faithfulness and omnipotence as we root ourselves in his love'
- Let's commit to that relationship with God which allows us – **WITH CONFIDENCE** – to pray in the promises of God!