

## **Crying Out to God in Chaotic Times, part 3**

Daniel 9:20-23

What should you do when you live in a society characterized by these words: **“There is no fear of God before their eyes?”** The absence of the fear of God was the unmaking<sup>i</sup> of the nation of Israel (Zephaniah 3:7-8). When they began to **“call evil good and good evil,”** they were **“wise in their own eyes”** and their nation was destroyed (Isaiah 5:20-25). Recent events have made us painfully aware of these same characteristics in our country.

What should you do when you sense that your own nation is being dismantled in the same way that Israel was, and for the same reasons? In these recent messages, we have been learning how to cry out to God in the chaotic times. Daniel, our God-given guide, has helped us to know how to navigate these troubled days. And we find a summary of his approach in Daniel 9:20. Through the prophet, the Holy Spirit guides us in what to do today. Daniel wrote:

**“And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God;”** Here Daniel shows us how or what the believer should do in a very personal appeal to God.

### **What the believer speaks to God, 20**

Beginning in verse 3, Daniel records that he gave himself to a season of fervent prayer. As we read the words of his prayer (vs. 4-19), we are struck with the way he praised the matchless nature of the one true God. In the light of God’s glory, he also confessed the abject spiritual poverty of his people: their sins, their iniquities and their transgressions. And as a direct result of their wickedness, Daniel confessed that they were a confused and bewildered people. Wouldn’t you agree that confusion seems to taunt every step of our nation lately? So what is a believer to do?

When he wants to give praise to God, but knows the spiritual poverty of his people and frankly admits that their punishment is deserved, what is a believer to do? One of the glorious answers that Daniel models for us is found in Psalm 62:8.

**“Trust in Him at all times; ye people, Pour out your heart before Him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.”**

This approach is appropriate for each and every believer in each and every age. Whatever the contents of your heart may be, the right thing to do is to pour them out before God. Is your heart full of God-honoring praise? Pour it out in adoration of the

Almighty! Is your heart full of bitterness? Pour it out in confession in order that He may turn you from bitterness to blessing. Are you confused? Pour out your heart in prayer for wisdom to the only One who can give you clarity. Notice the way that Daniel poured out his heart before God.

- Confession of personal sin

You will sometimes hear that the Bible makes no mention of Daniel's sin. There is such a mention in verse 20, and it comes from Daniel himself. Daniel was showing us that he was not a "super-saint." Like the prayerful prophet, Elijah (James 5:17-18), Daniel had a nature like ours, plagued with the same passions. Yet he prayed and God answered! This answers an important question for all of us: *If I am sinful, can I be prayerful?* According to Daniel, the answer is "yes." As he confessed his sin, the Lord answered his prayer with what many consider to be one of the most important prophecies about the coming ages. Is the sin in your heart keeping you from prayer and leaving you confused and puzzled? Remember the words of Psalm 66:18-19 **"If I regard [cherish] iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: but verily [truly] God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer."** Don't stop with the psalmist's words, **"the Lord will not hear me!"** Press on in prayer to latch on to the next phrase, **"but truly God has heard me!"**

Today, as believers, you and I need to make the next right choice. What is it? 1 John 1:9-10 puts it this way: **"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."** If your attitude causes you to say, "I'm not the problem here!" then it's time to take the beam out of your eye (Matthew 7:3-5) so that you can see our national situation clearly.

- Confession of national sin

Daniel not only confessed his personal sins, he also confessed **"the sin of my people Israel."** We have studied his confessions here in Daniel 9 in recent messages. By confession of your sin, you can clear your conscience and be free to call your nation's sins what they really are. When you see the many sinful policies of our political leaders, isn't it time to pray?

- Making appeals to the Lord

Daniel not only confessed his sins and his nation's sins, he also made appeals for his people. They were being held captive by a powerful nation. When tyrannical nations wield their power, what should a Christian do? He or she should recognize that **"the**

**most High God rules in the kingdom of men and He gives it to whomever He will and sets up over it the basest of men”** (Daniel 4:17). They Christian has the privilege of appealing to his Heavenly King when pompous human kings exercise their puny powers. Would you pray earnestly for your nation? Knowing what Jeremiah had prophesied about their captivity coming to an end, Daniel prayed. In essence, he prayed **“Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven”** (Matthew 6:10).

A foreign government is pressuring our nation right now to dictate hiring policies.<sup>ii</sup> They say that if any businesses or educational institutions hire selected government officials from the recent administration, they will refuse to do business with them. They refer to administration officials who challenged the many human rights abuses and unfair trade practices of this foreign power. When we see these intrusions into our society, what should we do? When David’s enemies encamped around him, he remembered that that Lord had said, **“Seek my face”**<sup>iii</sup> and his heart responded, **“Thy face, Lord, will I seek!”** (Psalm 27:8) What happened when Daniel prayed?

### **While the believer speaks to God, 20-21**

**“And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; Yea, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.”**

The short answer is this: when humble believers pray, God moves the heavens!<sup>iv</sup> Do you believe that? Do you believe it enough to get desperate and cry out to God in these chaotic times? Remember that **“we wrestle not against flesh and blood”** (Ephesians 6:12). What we are really wrestling with is **“principalities ...powers... the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”** Your arms are not long enough or strong enough to touch those enemies. But truth, righteousness, faith and prayer are the powerful weapons of Christian soldiers – God’s “special forces.”

But remember the great tragedy: those people had basically accepted their situation. This is reflected in the tragic words of Daniel 9:13, **“... yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.”** Would you be willing to pray that our nation would turn from its iniquities and understand God’s truth? If so, then let us cry out to God in these chaotic times. Daniel noted that the angel visited him **“about the time of the evening oblation.”** The temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed, and there was no formal Jewish temple sacrifice in Babylon. But Daniel remembered the daily schedule of his early days so well that he

used that memory to mark time. He remembered those Levitical sacrifices to God (see Leviticus 1:1-4). Now we recognize that **“without shedding of blood there is no remission”** [forgiveness of sins]. And each and every time a believer prays, it is on the basis of Christ’s death for sins and His rising again from the dead. We exercise a Gospel privilege each time we make our prayers to God. He has given us access to come boldly before His throne with our requests (Hebrews 4:16) **“to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”** Is this a time of need? Of course it is. Let us cry out to God in these chaotic times.

### **Why the believer speaks to God, 22-23**

**“And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.”**

Now we need to exercise great care with these verses to understand what God will do today. When Daniel prayed, God gave him a vision or revelation. “Revelation” is “the communication of a body of truth that was not formerly known,” and that’s what God did for Daniel. But today, we know that God’s Word is His completed revelation. When we pray, we should not expect to receive “truth that was not formerly known.” But the Bible does tell us that we will receive illumination – understanding what God has revealed in His Word. Even men like David, who received special revelation, understood this great need for illumination. Like David, we could pray, **“Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Law”** (Psalm 119:18).<sup>v</sup>

Perhaps the Lord Jesus had Daniel in mind when He instructed His disciples as to how to pray in Matthew 6:6. He said, **“...your Father who sees you in secret shall reward you openly.”** The Lord rewarded Daniel with the vision of Daniel 9:24-27. Commentators have noted that “Daniel 9:24-27 ‘contains perhaps the most significant prophecy for understanding most other OT and NT eschatological [prophetic] passages . . .’<sup>vi</sup> “It has been described as ‘the ‘key’ to prophetic interpretation...the ‘backbone’ of prophecy.’<sup>vii</sup> “Desmond Ford says that it is not only the devotional heart of the book but also contains ‘the crown jewels’ of Old Testament prophecy.”<sup>viii</sup>

Now, in conclusion, think about why you, as a believer, should cry out to God in these chaotic times.

- **“O Daniel” - Because God is our Judge.** Daniel’s name means, “God is my Judge.” Every one of us must give an account to God. Hebrews 4:13 reminds us that God sees every thought and every action and that we will give an account to him.

- **“I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding”** - Because God will give us wisdom if we ask. James 1:5 reminds us that God has promised us wisdom if we will ask. As one commentator explained, “Wisdom is required because the faithful do not always know how to persevere nor do they easily find the will to rejoice in future blessings while enduring present trials.”<sup>ix</sup>
- **“At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee;”** - Because God answers prayers. As we shall see in Daniel 10, the angel stressed this truth to Daniel: “from the first day” that he set his heart to pray, the answer was on the way. Answered prayer gives us new confidence to persevere in the days ahead (1 John 5:14-15).
- **“for thou art greatly beloved”** - Because believers are God’s greatly beloved children. Like Mary, who was “highly favored” (Luke 1:28), each believer is “accepted in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:6). Today we recognize that each member of the body of Christ revels in the love of the Father to the Son when He said, **“This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased”** (Matthew 3:17).
- **“therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.”** - Because understanding of God’s Word will lead to greater understanding. God did not merely say that Daniel would receive the vision. He also gave Daniel the commands to consider and understand the vision. Careful consideration gave Daniel greater understanding, and it will do the same for us today.

We began this message with the question: How should we respond to a society which has little or no fear of God? Turn to Luke 18:1-8, and notice the description Jesus gave of the unjust leader. If you have concerns about our national leaders right now, consider Christ’s teaching. That perverse leader said to himself, “I do not fear God nor regard man.” But because a desperate widow in his city kept appealing to him for justice, he granted her wish. But don’t miss the point Jesus made about prayer: **“And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?”** (Luke 18:7-8). Will you cry out to God in these chaotic times? Will you make it your personal priority to persevere in prayer and “cry day and night” unto the Lord?

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<sup>i</sup> See the earlier messages on Daniel 9 in this series, especially highlighting the words of Jeremiah 4:22-23

<sup>ii</sup> Patrick Goodenough, “Cotton: China’s ‘Powerful’ Sanctions on Trump Officials Are an Attempt to Intimidate Biden Officials” January 22, 2021, accessed at <https://cnsnews.com/index.php/article/international/patrick-goodenough/cotton->

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chinas-powerful-sanctions-trump-officials-are For the actual statement from the Chinese embassy, see <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/fyrth/t1847554.htm>

<sup>iii</sup> It is likely that he was meditating on 2 Chronicles 7:14 “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

<sup>iv</sup> This is even more evident in Daniel chapter 10.

<sup>v</sup> This is how David made the earlier connection we noted in using 2 Chronicles 7:14 to pray in Psalm 27:8

<sup>vi</sup> Charles E. McClain, “Daniel’s Prayer in Chapter 9,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal*, Volume 09:1 (Fall 2004) p.266

<sup>vii</sup> *Ibid.* citing James Montgomery Boice, *Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), pp. 103-4.

<sup>viii</sup> *Ibid.* citing a quote from Paul D. Feinberg, “An Exegetical and Theological Study of Daniel 9:24–27,” in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg*, ed. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), p. 189.

<sup>ix</sup> Kurt A. Richardson, *James*, vol. 36, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 63–64.