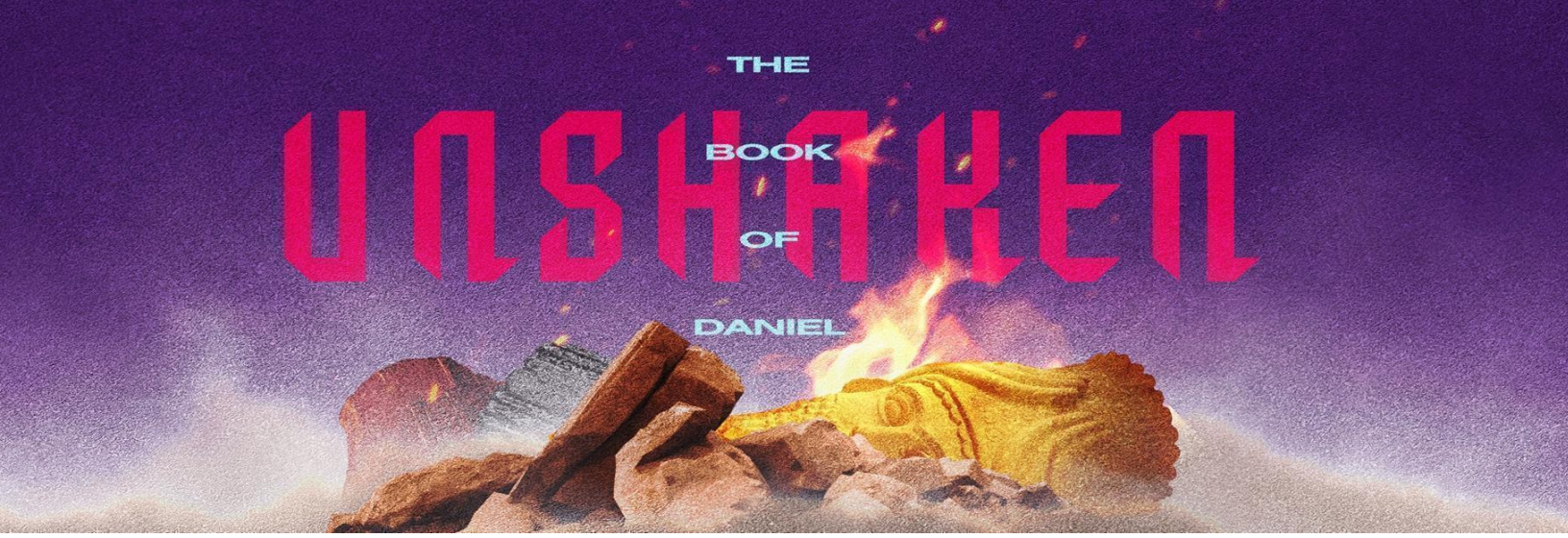


THE BOOK OF DANIEL



Week 9: Aug 10th -Aug 14th

Theme: Prayer Life (Chapter 9)

Weekly Memory Verse

“The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him.”

– Daniel 9:9

Day 1: Prayer

Prayer of Illumination

Lord God, may our response be as powerful and moving as Daniel’s response after he read your Holy Word. May we humble ourselves and plead with you in prayer and fasting. Amen

Reading

Read Chapter 9 entirely, then focus on Daniel 9:1-3.

Meditation

What is the Lord revealing to you today through Daniel 9:1-3?

What do these verses say about God’s character?

How does this apply to us today?

Contemplation

Daniel is now in the prime of his life. It is believed that he’s around 80 years of age at this point. He has served under two Babylonian kings (Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar) and has now entered into service under the new king, Darius the Mede. Daniel has been faithful to God in service his entire life. Oh, what life must have been like for him with the ache and sting of loneliness being taken captive from the only home he’d ever known. What if God decides that they are to stay in Babylon never to return home?

To Daniel’s amazement, God had something to say about all of this. He reads Jeremiah’s prophecy (Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10) and learns that Jerusalem must lie desolate for seventy

years, and then the Lord says that he would visit them and allow them to return. If Daniel is doing the math, it has been about 67 years since they'd been taken captive, which means the seventy years are almost at hand! What's his response after reading this? He turns to the Lord, pleads with him in fasting and prayer.

What a response! We've heard how important the spiritual disciplines of prayer and fasting are to our faith. They are life giving and can also be an instrument of important direction from God when coupled with the reading of Scripture. Daniel models this for us. Later on, we will see how the Lord responds to him, but for now let's place our attention on his posture of humility in prayer after reading God's Word.

May we all have a burning desire to drop to our knees in prayer in response to reading God's Word and give praise to Jesus for fulfilling all of God's promises to His people.

Reflection

What can we learn from Daniel's humble posture and how he responded to reading God's Word?

Can you think of a time when you've had an experience such as Daniel's where you were moved to pray immediately after reading Scripture? What was that experience like for you?

Reflect on today's reading and remember that we have the full story. We don't fear the future because our hope and confidence is in Jesus.

Day 2: Us

Prayer of Illumination

God, thank you that I do not have to walk through life disconnected and alone. Remind me to pray, not only as an individual, but as a member of the communities you have given me. Amen

Reading

Read Chapter 9 entirely, then focus on Daniel 9:4-14.

Meditation

What is the Lord revealing to you today through Daniel 9:4-14?

What do these verses say about the human condition?

How does this apply to us today?

Contemplation

Today we find Daniel in prayer, confessing the sin and shame of turning away from God. Doesn't that seem a bit odd after the previous eight chapters? We've read story after story of Daniel following God in impossible situations. Why is he confessing?

Note the pronouns he uses: "...WE have sinned..." "Open shame, O Lord, falls on US..."

"ALL Israel has transgressed your law..." "...WE have disobeyed..."

Each one is plural. Daniel laments Israel's collective wrongdoing for the sins he didn't individually participate in. He's certainly not perfect, but he stands out among his people as someone who consistently sought God's purposes. We might expect Daniel to differentiate himself from *those* Israelites — the specific individuals who turned from God: "God, most of Israel fails to follow you, but if you've been paying attention, you'll see I'm exceptional. I've been eating vegetables, interpreting dreams, and praying so much my enemies threw me to the lions. Israel as a whole deserves punishment, but I have been faithful to you."

However, Daniel counts himself as an Israelite. He accepts and repents for their collective sin. He doesn't pray FOR them. He prays AS them.

This mindset challenges an individualism that only prays for MY needs and confesses MY sins. For many of us, thinking of ourselves as part of a group and confessing on behalf of that group represents a difficult step in humility. Even so, Daniel shows us the unique depth to prayer that emerges when "I" becomes "we."

Reflection

What groups do you associate with/belong to?

What do your groups need? What do they need to confess?

Bring these things to God in prayer. Don't just pray for your group(s), pray as your group(s).

Day 3: Compassion

Prayer of Illumination

Father, help us to see you despite our faults and failures. Train us to see ourselves as you see us, in Jesus' name! Amen.

Reading

Read Chapter 9 entirely, then focus on Daniel 9:15-19

Meditation

What is the Lord revealing to you today through Daniel 9:15-19?

What do these verses say about God's character?

How does this apply to us today?

Contemplation

How many times have you perused the menu, rolled down your window, and shouted out your order at the fast-food restaurant of "Jesus Blesses?" Isn't that what many of us do when we hit our knees? We come prepared with our laundry list of cares and concerns as it pertains to what we need from God. It's hard not to, isn't it? I can't remember the last time either of my children came to me without their laundry list of needs, because my identity as "father" to them bears the responsibility of "provider." But guess what? When I go back in my mind and remember the moments where they talked to me more about who I am to them, rather than what they want from me, I wanted to move mountains for them!

Notice the dramatic shift in Daniel 9:15. This verse outlines the sin and wickedness that has brought Daniel to the point of prayer in the first place. But it seems as though, right in the middle of this, Daniel is sick of talking about what they are and makes a hard right turn to who He is. Daniel's focus changes in the rest of these verses! God's righteousness, God's sake, God's face. Daniel reminds himself who God is by naming and proclaiming who God is!

If earthly fathers would bend over backward to hear their children and bless them, how much more will our heavenly Father go to the ends of the earth and back for you and me when we remind Him of who He is to us!

Reflection

What view of God drives us to have this "gimme" mentality?

What practical means could help you make a prayerful shift to proclaiming who God is?

Is there an issue with how you see God as Father? Spend some time today allowing him to either heal or elevate your perspective on him as Father in your life.

Day 4: Sin

Prayer of Illumination

Lord Jesus, in you the Father fulfilled many prophecies, even the prophecies of Daniel. We look to you as the One in whom God's truth came to fullness. Teach us today, from Daniel 9, the truth about You and about God. Amen.

Reading

Read Chapter 9 entirely, then focus on Daniel 9:20-27.

Meditation

What is the Lord revealing to you today through Daniel 9:20-27?

What do these verses say about God's character?

How does this apply to us today?

Contemplation

We seem to have such a hard time remembering what to do with sin. On the one hand, we may dismiss it, having come to believe that our primary task is not to let it make us feel too badly about ourselves. On the other hand, if we take sin very seriously, it may leave us crippled, thinking "How can I approach God?" "How can I look my friends in the face after I have done such a terrible thing?"

Given too much or too little emphasis, our sin can keep us from doing the one necessary thing, the one thing Daniel does here: "*While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the Lord my God for the holy hill of my God*" (9:20). Daniel confesses sin even as he asks God to make things better. Without diminishing it or inflating it, he just lays it out there.

Then God sends "the man Gabriel" with a prophetic revelation: things are going to get worse before they get better. Then, they'll get worse before they get better again. Gabriel's interpretation points our attention to a final day when God will deal with God's enemies among God's people. For the Book of Daniel, this has everything to do with the historical reign of Antiochus IV.

But for the New Testament, this will have everything to do with Jesus who comes to defeat God's enemies among God's people in the form of his life, death, and resurrection.

This is why we can come to Jesus even though we have sin. He has already defeated Sin. In His presence, our sins are already dealt with -- we can come to him confessing, praying, and expecting the revelation of the Spirit, without needing to play up or play down our own sinfulness.

Reflection

Do you tend to downplay sin or overplay sin? What sins might you bring to Jesus?

Day 5: Pause & Reflect

Ask the Lord, journal, and pray through the following questions ...

God, what are some of the takeaways from Chapter 9 that you want to highlight in my life?

Spend time today posturing yourself to listen and reflect on each day's theme:

- Prayer
- Us
- Compassion
- Sin

What is one thing you are going to do in response to this week's message and reading plan, and who is going to hold you accountable?

Write down one takeaway and one action step in a journal to commit to it.

Weekly Memory Verse

"The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him."

– Daniel 9:9