

## Session 5

October 1, 2023

### CONFESS WHOLEHEARTEDLY

Daniel 9:3-10, 17-19

This great prayer of Daniel would have occurred when he was in his early 80s. The first year of King Darius the Mede was also the year that Daniel faced the lions in the lions' den of chapter 6. Although we can't tell which event came first, we can be sure that Daniel was mature in both age and faith. And while we don't know how prominent the Hebrew Scriptures were in Babylon, we know that Daniel had access to the prophecies written by Jeremiah (v. 2), who was a contemporary of Daniel's, albeit somewhat older than he. In his study, he found that Jeremiah had prophesied the captivity of Judah to last 70 years (Jer. 25:11). Once Daniel grasped the fact that over 60 years of the 70 prophesied were already completed, it was time to pray!

**Confession with humility (vv. 3-11).** Verses 3 and 4 give us eight characteristics of what I call Daniel's *prayer posture*. (1) He was *focused*. He tuned out everything else, and "turned his attention to the Lord God;" (2) He was *intentional*. He was *seeking* an audience with God; (3) He offered *prayers* (the general communication with God), and (4) *petitions* (requesting the favor of God). This all was accompanied by *fasting* (self-deprivation); (6) *sackcloth* (a cheap, rough cloak that was scratchy and uncomfortable; and (7) *ashes*, which were customarily tossed in the air and placed on the head as a sign of great sorrow. (8) Finally, there was *confession*, which carries the sense of agreeing with God regarding the extent of and guilt for sin. Verse 5 adds one more very important characteristic of Daniel's prayer posture: this was *intercessory*. Daniel confessed, "We have sinned..." This is particularly significant because chapter 6 demonstrated his personal innocence before God (see 6:22). But here, Daniel is praying for *his own people*. And he was identifying himself as part of the greater nation (see Is. 6:5 and Rom 10:1). The prayer itself is pretty self-explanatory. Daniel identifies his nation's *rebellion* (vv. 5-6) in contrast to the Lord's *righteousness* (v. 7). The first section closes with Daniel's confession that the whole nation (himself included) bears the guilt and thus has endured the consequences of captivity. For reflection: *Why do you think Daniel, who was now a nobleman far away in Babylon, found the need to pray for the entire nation of Judah? Can one man's prayer really make a difference? Why? What applications can we make for our own nation?*

**Reflection with honesty (vv. 11-16).** Notice the significant shift in pronouns here. Rather than praying directly to God (*You*), Daniel recounts the litany of sins Israel committed against *Him*. Daniel reminds himself (and everyone else) *why* they are suffering the judgment of captivity. Two characteristics of God are mentioned. First, God warned them of the coming judgment. Over and over, from the time of the Exodus on, God warned His people through the Scriptures that even though He was "a gracious Lord, full of compassion, slow to anger and great with mercy" (Ps 145:8-9), He did have limits. Their rebellion (particularly their idolatry) would end in judgment. And it had. Second, Daniel pointed out that even in judgment, God was showing His faithfulness. Yes, He was faithful to His word. But He was also faithful to His people. It should be noted that after the Babylonian captivity, their idolatry had been cured. God's judgment hurt...*but it worked.* For reflection: *What do you notice about Daniel's plea to God in verse 16? How did he appeal to God's faithfulness to Himself and His people in asking for His mercy?*

**Petition with urgency (vv. 17-19).** Notice the urgency in Daniel's petition. By any reckoning, the 70 years was not yet up, but Daniel was pleading for an end to the captivity. Verse 18 is key: "For we are not presenting our petitions before You based on our righteous acts but based on Your abundant compassion." Daniel was bold in approaching God even before the end of their captivity. But he was not blaming God for His judgment. In fact, he was acknowledging God's righteousness in the midst of His judgment! Instead, Daniel was appealing to God based on His attribute of "abundant compassion." For reflection: *Think about Daniel's approach to God. Can you see other places in the Bible where God's favor is found only as a result of His compassion? How can you see this in your own spiritual journey?*