

There is a desperate need for a spiritual awakening as we face the end of the twentieth century. What's ironic is that the twentieth century dawned with a great spiritual awakening around the world. The greatest such movement was the Welsh revival which began in 1904.

Granted, today the term "revival" is tossed around flippantly. Frankly, there's much confusion about revival. J. Edwin Orr, an author who has specialized on the subject, says he saw a sign in the San Fernando Valley that read, "Revival Every Monday." Five miles down the road he saw another sign, "Revival Every Night Except Monday."

My friend, a genuine revival, an authentic spiritual awakening, cannot be manufactured by putting up a sign in front of a church. How then does it happen?

Consider the Welsh Revival. Its leading figure was a 26-year old student by the name of Evan Roberts (as told by Orr, Campus Aflame). With the permission of his college principal, Roberts left his studies and went to a church in his home of Lougher. Only 17 people were there to hear his first message.

He gave them four points--Confess any known sin to God and put right any wrong done to man; Put away any doubtful habit; Obey the Spirit promptly; And, confess faith in Christ openly. The response was instantaneous.

Within three months, 100,000 converts had been added to the churches in Wales. You say, "Was it genuine?" Five years later, a person wrote a book to try to discredit the validity of the Revival, and the author's main point of attack was that of the 100,000 added to the churches, only 80,000 remained five years later. *Only 80,000!*

J. Edwin Orr writes (101), "The influence of the Revival upon life in Wales was beyond calculation. Crime was so greatly diminished that the magistrates in certain counties were presented with white gloves, signifying not a case to try. Drunkenness was cut in half, and a wave of bankruptcies swept the taverns of the principality. Profanity was curbed, until it was said that the pit-ponies in the mines could not understand their orders."

What would it take to see a spiritual awakening like that? True revival is the work of God. Period. We can't cause a revival by scheduling a week of "revival meetings." Yet we can create a climate for revival. Historically, revival has occurred when God's people, no matter how small the remnant, gave serious attention to prayer.

There are few people in the Bible more qualified to teach us how to pray than Daniel. Daniel was a man of prayer. In Daniel 2, with his life on the line due to the edict of Nebuchadnezzar, remember what Daniel did? He scheduled a prayer meeting with his friends (2:18). Another time, when the options were either pray-and-die, or not-pray-and-live, Daniel chose to pray and face the lion's den (ch 6).

We find the most vivid insight into the prayer life of Daniel, however, in Daniel 9. If we are serious about wanting to learn how to pray, I mean *really* pray, then we must give serious attention to Daniel 9.

**Proposition: Our prayer lives can be more honoring to God if we observe and implement two components found in Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9.**

---

\*\*\*Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

- I. Prayer involves proper preparation (1-3).
  - A. Daniel discovered a promise of God (1-2).
  - B. Daniel prayed in light of that promise (3).
    - 1. We must fill our minds with Scripture.
    - 2. We must humble ourselves so God can be exalted.
- II. Prayer involves proper perspective (4-19).
  - A. He looks up (4).
    - 1. God is great.
    - 2. God is good.
  - B. He looks back (5-6).
    - 1. We confess the wrong we did (5).
    - 2. We confess the right we didn't do (6).
  - C. He looks down (7-10).
    - 1. You are righteous, but we are ashamed (7-8).
    - 2. You are merciful, but we've been rebellious (9).
    - 3. You are faithful, but we've been unfaithful (10).
  - D. He looks to Scripture (11-14).
  - E. He looks up again (15-19).

I. Prayer involves proper preparation (1-3).

Let's notice the preparation that led to Daniel's prayer by jumping right into the account. V 1 begins, "In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans."

Daniel, a Jew, was in exile. Daniel was also a prophet to whom God revealed future events in a series of visions which Daniel recorded in chapters 7-12. I remind you that the book of Daniel is not arranged chronologically. When did Daniel's prayer in chapter 9 occur, according to v 1? In the first year of Darius. We first met Darius back in Daniel 5:30-31. It was Darius the Mede who took control of Babylon when the Medo-Persians overthrew the Babylonian kingdom.

So the events in chapter 9 chronologically follow right after the events recorded in chapter 5. The date for Daniel's prayer and prophecy in chapter 9 was 538 or 537 B.C. (Strauss), a year of political upheaval and uncertainty in the Middle East.

What happened to Daniel that year? Two things according to verses 1-3.

**A. Daniel discovered a promise of God (1-2).** V 2 tells us how it happened, "In the first year of his reign, I Daniel, understood by books the number of the years, concerning which the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem."

I don't know how many books of Scripture were available to Daniel in the 6th century B.C. I do know that somehow he obtained the book of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, served in Judah at the time Daniel was a child. It was Jeremiah who preached to the Jews and told them God was going to send them into captivity. In time, he wrote down his prophetic message, but king Jehoiakim burned the scroll in the fire (Jer 36:23). At the Lord's instruction, Jeremiah rewrote his book. Later, this man of God was taken captive by his fellow Jews, carried off to Egypt against his will, and where he eventually was buried in a nameless grave in a strange land (Walvoord, 202).

But that's not the end of the story. Somehow, the timeless Scriptures which Jeremiah wrote found their way across desert and mountain to far away Babylon, and fell into the hands of Daniel. Talk about the sovereignty of God!

The following dates are of great significance if we are to appreciate Daniel's response. Daniel was carried into captivity in Babylon in 605 B.C. He read Jeremiah's scroll (ch 9) in 538 B.C., about 67 years after his captivity first began.

Now, guess what he read in Jeremiah's book? Jeremiah prophesied that the desolation of Jerusalem would last 70 years (2). We see the actual prediction in Jeremiah 25:11-12, "This whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation..."

Daniel must have marveled as he read Jeremiah and then read his newspaper. They both spoke of the same event, the destruction of the king of Babylon!

Then Daniel found something else in Jeremiah, this time in Jer 29:10-14, "For thus saith the LORD, After seventy years are accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return even unto this place."

What a promise! God said He would bring His people back home after 70 years, and the 70 years was nearly up! Guess what Daniel did next with that promise?

**B. Daniel prayed in light of that promise (3).** V 3 "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications; with fasting and sackcloth, and ashes."

What made Daniel such a man of prayer? Simply this. He was a man of the Book. He searched the Scriptures to allow God to speak to him, and then he prayed in light of what God said. The Book prompted prayer. If we want to become prayer warriors as was Daniel, we must follow his example in two ways.

1. *We must fill our minds with Scripture.* An important transition took place for the Jews in Babylonian captivity, and Daniel is a case in point. The temple was no longer at the center of their lives, for there was no temple. What became central to godly living was the Book. Yes, God spoke to Daniel in visions, but those were exceptions, not the norm. What was the chief source of his inspiration, his direction, his strength? The Book.

The Book was where you turned to meet with God, to hear from God, to learn about how to live for God. The Book became central to godly living. Don't miss this. Daniel's great prayer in chapter 9 flows out of his time in the Book.

You say, "Pastor, what can I do to improve my prayer life?" The answer is, spend more time in the Book. The Book prompted prayer, and eventually spiritual renewal for God's people. Daniel's example teaches us something else.

2. *We must humble ourselves so God can be exalted.* Notice what v 3 says that Daniel did to prepare himself to pray. He turned to the Lord God and pleaded with Him. He fasted (and remember Daniel is approaching 90 years of age). He put on sackcloth and ashes. All are acts of humility. Fasting reminds us that we don't deserve even food from God. Wearing sackcloth admits that we don't deserve the comforts of life. Putting ashes on one's head is an expression of grief for sin. In short, Daniel practiced the truth contained in James 4:10, "Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up."

My friends, there's one thing you can't miss about Daniel. He didn't play games with God. He was a man of the Book, and what God said, he believed. He was a man of prayer, and when he prayed, he knew he had an audience with the King of kings.

Martin Niemoller, a German pastor and prisoner of Adolph Hitler, once shared this account at a meeting with the National Bible Society (in Wallace, 151): "Let me tell one

story of my life, of how I came to know what this book is worth. It was on the 2nd day of March, in 1938. I had been in prison in Berlin for eight months and had been tried. After the trial I had been taken by the Secret State Police and they had put me in a van, and had brought me to a concentration camp north of Berlin. They took my wallet, they took my wrist watch, they took my wedding ring, and they took my pocket Bible, which I had been allowed to have with me during the days and weeks and months in Berlin prison. This first night I shall never forget, because I didn't sleep for one minute. I didn't find any peace. I was quarreling with God and blaming Him. I had lost my memory during the very strenuous weeks of the trial. I couldn't remember a single verse from the Book by myself. I was dependent on what was printed. I assure you I should gladly have given not only eight oxen but years of my life if only I could have had that Book. Next morning, when the commandant entered, I asked him, 'Let me have my Bible back.' The man wavered. I was the personal prisoner of the Fuehrer. If he treated me too harshly it might be bad; and if he treated me too well that might be bad also. In the end he turned to the orderly and said, 'God over to my office and bring the book which is on my desk. It is the Bible; you bring it here.' I had not yet been for twelve hours in the concentration camp and the Book had entered--the Holy Bible--the Book that bears witness and testifies to the One to Whom all power belongs in heaven and earth, even in concentration camp. There the Book was, and there He was with all His strength, with all His comfort, with all I needed."

Do you cherish the Book like that? Prayer involves proper preparation.

## II. Prayer involves proper perspective (4-19).

We see Daniel's actual prayer in verses 4-19. From Daniel's example, we can see five perspectives in prayer (we'll look at the first three this week, and the final two next time).

**A. He looks up (4).** In order to pray, we must take our eyes off of ourselves, and look up. Prayer is not talking to ourselves. It's talking to God. Prayer is not looking within ourselves for answers (like TM promotes). Biblical prayer is looking up to God.

Watch how Daniel began his prayer in v 4 (NIV), "I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands." What do we learn about God here from Daniel?

1. *God is great.* Daniel addressed Him as "the great and awesome God." You can't have a true concept of *yourself* until you have a true concept of *God*. He's great.

2. *God is good.* I love the two words Daniel uses to describe God in v 4, "I prayed unto the LORD *my God*." This is a personal conversation between two individuals that had a personal relationship--Daniel and God. You say, "If God is great, how can we talk with Him?" It's because He's also good. He is the One Who enters into a covenant of love with His people.

In order for our prayers to be biblical, we must look up. The problem is, most of us have deficient thoughts of God. We're prone to minimize His greatness and doubt His goodness.

Earlier this week, while I was in the church study, the telephone rang. I answered it, "Wheelersburg Baptist Church," and heard a lady's voice ask: "May I speak with the owner?" Taken back briefly, I replied, "The owner? This is a church." To which the lady replied matter-of-factly, "I'd like to talk with the person who owns the residence." I

couldn't resist the opportunity so I responded, "God owns it. Are you calling to sell something?" "Yes. House Insurance," was her reply. Our conversation ended.

I know the lady's call was more mistaken than intentional, but it reminds me that some people have a tendency to leave God out of the picture. My friends, the first perspective we need when we pray is to look up. God is great and God is good.

**B. He looks back (5-6).** To be technical, Daniel's prayer is a prayer of confession (see v 4 "I prayed to the Lord and made my confession"). To confess, what must we do? We must look back at our past. Daniel again shows us how. In his prayer, Daniel shows that in confession, we must look back and confess two things to God.

1. *We confess the wrong we did (5).* "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thine ordinances." Daniel didn't beat around the bush. He said, "We've sinned."

Did you realize that Daniel is one of the few characters in the Bible to whom some sin is not ascribed. Why, then, does he include himself in this confession, "*We have sinned.*" Was it really his fault that God judged the Israelites 70 years earlier?

Daniel had a better handle than most of us do on two issues. One was the corporate nature of God's covenant. Daniel's prayer, like the Lord's prayer, isn't an *I* prayer, but a *we* prayer. In God's covenant, it's not God and *me*, but God and *us*. We are entitled to both privileges and responsibilities as members of the community of God's redeemed. The other issue Daniel grasped was the holiness of God. It may be true that your sin isn't as repulsive as your neighbor's sin in *your* eyes, but it's also true that *all* sin is repulsive in God's eyes. Daniel knew that. So when he prayed, he looked back and confessed the wrong *we* did. There's a second area which warrants our confession.

2. *We confess the right we didn't do (6).* We can be guilty of sins of omission as well as sins of commission. Daniel confessed of the former in v 6 (LB), "We have refused to listen to Your servants the prophets, whom You sent again and again down through the years, with Your messages to our kings and princes and to all the people."

Oh the heartache that could have been prevented had they listened. Daniel grieves, "Lord, time after time You warned us. You pleaded with us. But we didn't listen."

Are we any different? How often have you had to learn the hard way in your life? Perhaps your parents warned you, "If you run with that crowd, you're going to get hurt." But you refused to listen, and had to learn the hard way. Possibly you can remember your youth leader warning you, "Don't be deceived. Sex outside of marriage brings severe consequences." But you refused to listen.

Yes, we know there's a high price for sin's pleasure, but often, we proceed anyway. We think we'll be the exception. We think wrong.

I enjoy languages, and am fascinated by words and sounds in different languages. Do you want to know what I believe are three of the hardest words to say (they're English, by the way)? Here they are: "I was wrong." It's hard to admit the truth about yourself. It's even harder to confess the truth and say, "I was wrong."

Yet confession is a prerequisite for restoration. It was for Israel. It is for us. Did you realize that true revivals are always marked by confession of sin. When revival occurs, people get things right--with God, and with each other. Church members who have harbored bitter feelings for years break down and confess their sin to each other.

Do you have any known sin in your life? Know this. Sin short-circuits the blessing of God--from your family, from your church, from yourself. But here's the good news. Confession opens the windows of heaven! (see Prov 28:13)

I invite you to look back this morning. And as we see the wrong we've done, and the right we didn't do, let's confess it to God. (see Ps 130:3-4 "If you, Lord, kept a record...")

There's a third perspective in Daniel's prayer. He looks up, he looks back, and...

**C. He looks down (7-10).** In shame. You can't help but look down when you see your sinfulness in the sight of a holy God. In verses 7-10, notice three contrasts Daniel draws between God and His people: "God, *You* are this, but *we* are this."

1. *You are righteous, but we are ashamed (7-8).* V 7 (NIV) "Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame..." And v 8, "O LORD, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you." Twice, as the KJV puts it, Daniel describes his feelings as "confusion of face." He cries out to God, "Lord, You are righteous, but we are covered with shame."

Listen carefully. We live in a society that doesn't believe what Daniel just said. Shame is the result of sin. We are told that we can get rid of shame without getting rid of the sin.

For instance, if you stop going to church, stop tithing, and start spending Sunday mornings on the links, what will you feel? Probably some shame. Next, suppose you falsify figures on your income tax form, and start having an affair on the side. Then what will you feel? More shame. In fact, the inner turmoil of conviction may get so bad you can't sleep at night, your stomach's in knots, and your blood pressure goes up. So you go to a psychiatrist. You tell him, "Doc, I can't sleep at night. I'm having anxiety attacks. Can you help me?" Will he tell you to change your behavior? I doubt it. What will he likely do? Give you medication. What will the medication do? Deal with the symptom, not the cause.

Daniel shows us the God-honoring way to get rid of shame. It's to get rid of sin. Listen to Daniel's words again (8), "To us belongs confusion of face, because we have sinned against Thee." Why the shame? Because of sin. A second contrast...

2. *You are merciful, but we've been rebellious (9).* "To the Lord, our God, belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him." Don't miss the fact that nouns are plural. What's available with God? Not just mercy and forgiveness (the NIV misses this), but "mercies and forgivenesses." You see, there are lots of needy people in this world, and God's mercies and forgivenesses are sufficient for us all!

3. *You are faithful, but we've been unfaithful (10).* Back in v 4, what did we see was true of God? He keeps His covenant. He's faithful. What did Daniel confess as being his people's basic problem? In one word--disobedience. They have drifted away from the Book. As v 10 states, "Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD, our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants, the prophets."

The point is this. Here are the perspectives of genuine, God-honoring prayer. When Daniel prays, he looks up and sees God for Who He is; he looks back and confesses his sin for what it is; then he looks down in shame when he sees his people in contrast with God. I merely want to mention the final two perspectives which we'll develop next time.

**D. He looks to Scripture (11-14).** He allows God to interpret the predicament.

**E. He looks up again (15-19).** After reviewing how God helped His people in the past, Daniel invites God to act in the present. "Help us, Lord, for Your sake (17), for Your Name (18), because we are Your people (19)."

My friend, I want to close with a question. Have you gotten away from living by the Book? Have you gotten away from the Book in your marriage? Have you gotten away from the Book in the way you discipline your children? Have you gotten away from the Book in the way you run your business? Choose today to get back to the Book.

How? It starts by looking up. Look up in humility. Look up with expectancy. Know that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb 11:6).

Response: Let's respond by singing a song based on Psalm 139:23-24, a song which invites God to search us, to try us, to know us, and then to cleanse us.

*Hymn of Response: #438 "Cleanse Me"*

In the message that God used to initiate the Welsh Revival, Evan Roberts gave his congregation of 17 people four points. Here they are again:

1. Confess any known sin to God and put right any wrong done to man.
2. Put away any doubtful habit.
3. Obey the Spirit promptly.
4. And, confess faith in Christ openly.

True spiritual awakening is the work of the Spirit of God, and cannot be manufactured. But we can create an environment for revival. We can cooperate with the Holy Spirit instead of resisting Him. I want us, this morning, to take heed to these same four points.

1. Are their sins against God and wrongs you've committed against people that mark your life? Will you choose right now to confess those sins to God, and determine to make right any wrong you've done to another?

2. Do you have any doubtful, ungodly habits in your life? Will you get rid of them? Achan's hidden sin robbed the nation of Israel of God's blessing. Your hidden habit is robbing God of glory, not to mention it's robbing you, your family, and your church of the blessing God would pour out. Choose to put away that habit.

3. Are you willing to obey the Spirit promptly? Choose today to surrender your will to Him. Tell the Lord, "My life is Yours. Use me for Your honor."

4. Are you willing to confess faith in Christ openly? We are not saved by our good works. We are saved by trusting Christ. That's a private decision, but it has public implications. When we become a Christian, we are saying, "I no longer live for myself. I live for the One Who died for my sins, and Who lives in me." Are you willing to confess Christ *openly* today?

*Time of Response in Prayer*

Now that we've experienced the cleansing of God, let's sing and tell Him how much we appreciate Him and His wonderful forgiveness.

*Worship through Singing: #80 "I Love You, Lord"*

A very tangible way we can express our appreciation for the Lord is through our giving. The ushers will come and provide us with this opportunity of worship.

*Worship through Giving*