

# ***Sabbath School Today***

## **With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

### ***Daniel***

#### **Lesson 10: From Confession to Consolation**

Many years ago one of the Andrews Seminary professors, Leslie Hardinge, had a unique way of looking at the prayer recorded in Daniel 9. He asked his students to read aloud the entire prayer, verses 3-19, and time how long it took. With a big grin on his face, he would read verse 23 where the angel Gabriel relates to Daniel that as soon as he started his prayer, Gabriel was commissioned to leave heaven and meet with Daniel on earth. With the grin still on his face, Dr. Hardinge would tell his students that this is a good indication of the distance between us and heaven.

While this idea might be a little tongue-in-cheek, it's just a literal way to make heaven more real. We know that the Holy Spirit given to us by Jesus is everywhere all the time, and in reality, He doesn't need a few minutes to get to us when we pray, but if Daniel had to wait, we can persist in prayer like he did.

This wasn't an ordinary prayer. Daniel had been studying his Bible, specifically the prophecies of Jeremiah (25:11, 12; 29:1, 10), and he realized that the captivity had been predicted to last only 70 years and that was almost done. At this point in his lengthy life, Daniel could have left studying to the younger men, but he knew the need for staying close to God through His written word. He was a prophet who had explained Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the image, and the first phase, the fall of Babylon and power transfer to Medo-Persia, had already happened. That must have made him a highly respected legend, yet he was remained humble enough to study the scriptures.

Daniel's prayer is one of the best examples of "corporate repentance" found in the Bible. "We are told: 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ' (Gal. 6:2). By taking his people's sins upon himself, Daniel was experiencing a repentance for the sins of others, as though they were his sins (he had not joined in their apostasy!). This is the kind of repentance that Jesus experienced in our behalf. When He came to John the Baptist requesting baptism, John refused Him, for he knew that Jesus was sinless. But Jesus had to explain to him that He has come as 'the Lamb of God' taking upon Himself the sins of the entire human race. ... John was not permitted to baptize anyone except 'for repentance.' This repentance that Jesus experienced in our behalf was a corporate repentance—repenting for the sins of others, putting Himself in our place. As soon as we begin confessing 'our' sin as Daniel did, realizing that the sin of others would be our sin but for the grace of Christ, revival and refreshing of the Holy Spirit will sweep through God's people." [1]

Daniel's prayer begins with a hopeful note. "Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and Keep His

commandments” (Dan. 9:4, *New American Standard Bible*). Daniel knew God didn’t need to be reminded of His promises to His people, but it was probably good for Daniel to say these words and remind himself that he served a loving and faithful God. This is a gracious way to start any prayer which can serve to remind us that those promises (covenants) that He made to ancient Israel also apply to modern Israel who believe in Christ. (cf. Gal. 3:29). God is the loving, covenant keeping God that He has always been. It is the same God that came looking for Adam and Eve on the day they sinned. He was not coming to punish them so much as He was there to tell them that they had a significant problem that would kill them, but that He had a solution—the entire plan of salvation.

Daniel’s prayer reveals the best reason for prayer. “Daniel pleads a reason that at present moves only a few of God’s people to pray. Not for their *own* personal or selfish benefit, but that the *Lord’s name may be honored and glorified before the world*. ... Moses used the same argument in pleading for Israel (Num. 14:11-19). As we near the end, this paradigm shift in motivation will more and more impress God’s people.” [2]

One of the important facets of the 1888 message is that our motivation for seeking the Lord changes from self-centered requests for our own benefit. We join Daniel and Moses in their concern that the people of the world will misunderstand who God is and how much He loves and cares for His wayward children. Most people have trouble believing God loves even people who are against Him. They don’t realize that God poured His love into our hearts through the gift of the Holy Spirit while we were sinners, ungodly, helpless and enemies (see Rom. 5:5-10).

A little insight into the mind of Daniel is found in Daniel 9:21. He is offering his prayer “at about the time of the evening offering.” Daniel knew the sanctuary in Jerusalem was demolished and we have no record that the Jews attempted or were even allowed to keep the services going while they were in Babylon. In his small way, Daniel was doing what he could to keep the prayers for his nation going by molding his life according to the sanctuary schedule. The “daily” sacrifices offered by the priests were “corporate” sacrifices made on behalf of the entire camp.

It is interesting that the question Daniel is asking is the one he first asked back in Daniel chapter 8 since he was troubled by that vision and had become sick and exhausted trying to understand it. Daniel had been studying to try to understand what “2300 evenings and mornings” meant for about 12-13 years since that original vision. Daniel was trying to fit the time frame into the restoration of the temple in Jerusalem, but he was still confused. Even though Daniel was assured in chapter 8:26 that the vision pertained to “many days in the future,” he was still trying to understand it. This must be part of the reason Gabriel tells him he is “highly esteemed.” He has persistently been praying for understanding for 12-13 years.

So many people have no interest in what is happening in heaven. Many go about our daily routines ignoring that there is a heaven and a God who is very interested in us. We fail to recognize how all of heaven is working for humanity’s benefit to help us

understand what heaven is trying to communicate. Daniel was given the vision of the 70-week prophecy which pinpoints when Christ would come to earth to accomplish the sacrificial phase of the plan of salvation.

Daniel chose to believe the Good News of the great plan of salvation that God was accomplishing through the centuries of earth's time. He also chose to respond and receive Christ's legal justification which gave Daniel the experience of justification by faith. This resulted in his obedience and interest in heavenly things. Pray that we who are privileged to hear this "most precious message" will also receive Christ's free gift.

—Arlene Hill

**Endnotes:**

[1] Robert J. Wieland, *The Gospel in Daniel*, Glad Tidings Publishers. pp. 128-129 (2004).

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 132.

**Notes:**

Pastor Paul Penno's video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcqAPk1-Nyg>

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