

Dartmouth

Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Forgiveness

Scripture: Daniel 9:1-11

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M., D.Min.

Date: January 17th, 2010

A Holy God and the Need to Be Forgiven

Daniel 9:1-11 (NASB)

IN the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans—² in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was *revealed* as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, *namely*, seventy years.³ So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek *Him by* prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.⁴ And I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, “Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments,⁵ we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly, and rebelled, even turning aside from Thy commandments and ordinances.⁶ “Moreover, we have not listened to Thy servants the prophets, who spoke in Thy name to our kings, our princes, our fathers, and all the people of the land.⁷ “Righteousness belongs to Thee, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries to which Thou hast driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against Thee.⁸ “Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against Thee.⁹ “To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him;¹⁰ nor have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets.¹¹ “Indeed all Israel has transgressed Thy law and turned aside, not obeying Thy voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him.

Introduction It was now the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede. It was 539 B.C., 66 years after Daniel had been exiled. The overthrow of the Babylonian Kingdom by the Medo-Persians was indeed a momentous event. It had been revealed to Belshazzar through Daniel’s interpretation of the writing on the wall (Dan. 5:25-28, 30). The Babylonian overthrow prepared the way for liberation of the Jews who had been in exile since Nebuchadnezzar’s first invasion of Jerusalem in 605 B.C. Besides predicting the overthrow of the people Jeremiah had also predicted that Israel’s sojourn in Babylon was to last 70 years (Jer. 25:11-12). Evidently moved by Darius’ victory Daniel searched the Scriptures to understand the events of which he was a vital part. He understood Darius’

victory meant that the termination of the 70-year Captivity was near. Thus these significant events became even more momentous for Daniel.¹

In our reading today from Dan. 9 we see Daniel confessing the sins of God's people, and he says in that confession, **We**. Here are his words: ***we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly, and rebelled, even turning aside from Thy commandments and ordinances. Moreover, we have not listened to Thy servants the prophets (vss.5b,6a) ...Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against Thee (vs.8.) we have rebelled against Him; ¹⁰ nor have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets. ¹¹ "Indeed all Israel has transgressed Thy law and turned aside, not obeying Thy voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him. (vss.9b-11).*** Now, you might be thinking, "Whew. That's them. Glad he's not talking about us. They were pretty bad!"

Today we are beginning a new pulpit series on the subject of "forgiveness."

- **The subject of forgiveness lies at the core of the whole Christian faith.**
- Whether we are talking about
 - **what we need FROM GOD**, or
 - **what we need FROM EACH OTHER**, or
 - **what we need to FREELY GIVE TO EACH OTHER**, it is a hot topic.
- In fact, I think "forgiveness" is *never* not a hot topic. Doing the counseling that I do between people; reading the news about human conflict every day, all over the globe; feeling my own personal issues of forgiveness deep inside my head and heart—I think the Bible is quite right when it describes the biggest and most frequent problem we *have* is the challenge of forgiving or being forgiven.

Daniel sits there in 539 B.C., agonizing, over the sinfulness of God's people. Just after this he receives a great vision, the seventy weeks, but here he is confessing, admitting that God's people had (notice the words)—"sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly, rebelled, turned aside from the Law, not listened to God's servants, not obeyed God's voice, transgressed God's law." Those are all tough words. They describe a serious state of fracture between God and people! We might be inclined to say "those words are Old Testament words, and there they ought to stay." But they capture the human condition between God and man. Not just Israel's condition in 539 B.C. Daniel had a deep insight

¹John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), Da 9:1.

into what the WHOLE problem between man and God is, and also between man and man!

A STUDY OF “FORGIVENESS” MUST BE ESTABLISHED WITH A PROOF OF ITS RELEVANCE.

Now, the need for forgiveness needs to be sold to people as a starting place because we all know people in many areas of life—the family, the workplace, the soccer field, the mall—who will admit little to no guilt. It is quite popular for people to depict themselves as basically good. People are often quick to say, “I’ve never done anything really bad.”

For time’s sake, I am going to assume that you respect the Bible and that you recognize its authority. The question is, “does the Bible implicate, accuse, indict, and convict mankind of having a universal sin problem? It does. The Bible teaches plainly that all people, men and women, young and old, every nationality, in every century, are infected with a basic genetic fault—the inclination to rebel against the Law of God. It is called “sin.” Everyone is born with it, and although not everyone manifests it in the same ways or with equal destructiveness, everyone *does* start to assert their sin natures at an early age. I called it, “refining the art” of sinning, the older the child becomes. By adulthood, all people are full fledged “Ph.D.s” in the art and science of breaking God’s law. This is what the writings of Moses, the prophets and the apostles consistently claims.

The writings of the Bible also claim that God, the One God, the magnificent God, is utterly clean and pure and possessing of a blazing holiness and presence. Rebellion against Him is utterly absurd, but the thing is, since God is not just a force (He is a person) it actually grieves Him because He cares about people. And while His holiness cannot permit sin and sinfulness in His presence, He could not allow mankind to just sink into oblivion and disappear into judgment without intervening. He is a God of love, and He loved the world *so much* that He made the gift of His only Son, that if people would simply believe on Him, believe on Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah of God, they would not perish. This plan would not simply secure an endless existence for people who believe. No, they would be given, as a gift, a wonderful life in the place of their sinful life. And that life will have no end, even when these bodies expire.

But finding eternal life in Christ—what we call “becoming a Christian”—must begin with a recognition of the NEED to be forgiven by God for sin, and for our basic sinfulness.

Now one thing I have noticed over the years of doing ministry, and wanting to share about the wonder of Jesus Christ with people: we cannot convince

people that they need to be forgiven for their sins. They either believe that, or they do not. I never see the prophets or the apostles *trying* to convince people that they are sinners. What they DID was to PROCLAIM God's Word on the state of sinfulness that people are in. They would go to great ends to do that! But to try to convict people by argument or by outwitting people intellectually, that is not something they did. Listen to what Paul said on Mars Hill to those Stoic and Epicurean philosophers:

“The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;²⁵ neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things;²⁶ and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation,²⁷ that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;²⁸ for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His offspring.’²⁹ “Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.³⁰ “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent,³¹ because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” Acts 17:24-31

We all need to see ourselves against the backdrop of who God is. All people WILL see themselves eventually in the context of a holy God. That doesn't mean that even then all people will repent. Satan certainly knows who God is, and somehow he, himself, became more important to him than serving God. And so he fell. People remain fallen if they do not see their NEED to be forgiven.

When we do something wrong, we may or may not admit our guilt. When we get CAUGHT we are more apt to admit it, but even then we might rationalize it. What people need therefore, is to somehow really SEE their need for forgiveness...

One time a company executive absconded with some company funds—cash, actually, thirty thousand dollars. He got away with it for a while and was feeling pretty clever. Then, he was found out, confronted by his bosses, and the evidence was unmistakable. He was guilty and the jig was up. He felt bad that he had been caught, and was vaguely sorry—his conscience wasn't completely unfeeling. But then he learned that the money he had stolen was in fact reserved for an orphanage construction project, in his own neighborhood! The funds he had stolen, were gone. They were not recoverable, and he lost his job over the theft. But the real regret he felt was to pass the lot where the house *was* to be built, and watch it not get built. He knew orphans in his neighborhood, and watched their struggle

every time he saw them... He knew then, and only then—when he saw the scope of his thievery—that he was guilty.

DO YOU EVER FEEL CONVICTED OF YOUR OWN SIN? DO YOU FEEL THE NEED TO BE FORGIVEN BECAUSE YOU KNOW YOU ARE GUILTY? DO YOU SENSE DANGER IF YOU SOMEHOW DO NOT RECEIVE FORGIVENESS?

When I was in college, our little church would host a busload of deaf kids each summer—one night on their way to a Christian camp in Tennessee, and then one night on their way back home, passing through our town again. Twenty deaf kids was interesting to meet. I learned that at this camp, they spend the first three days just teaching them what the Bible says about sin. No mention of redemption, hope or forgiveness. Then, they would unveil the Gospel to the kids. I remember noticing a distinct change in many of the kids on their way home, passing through our town... They had been told about the profound NEED of forgiveness, and told well. Then they were told about the availability of forgiveness. I remember also thinking, “well, that’s a fine manipulation! Who WOULDN’T flee to forgiveness, once thoroughly scared out of their wits?” And that is the point. It wasn’t manipulation. It was information!!!

Conviction of the need of a Savior is something of a mystery as to how it happens, but Paul gives us some light-- ***Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, ¹⁵ since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.¹⁶ This will take place on the day when God will judge men’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.***

Romans 2:14-16 (NIV)

We cannot broker, or manipulate or even convince people in their hearts that they need a Savior, that they need to be forgiven for their sins. But we can pray to that end. And I think that is a completely appropriate thing to pray for: for people to feel a conviction of their sins and see the NEED FOR RESCUE. John says the Holy Spirit is in the business of helping people see their need of Christ—that it is sin itself to reject Him: ***And He, [the Holy Spirit] when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me...*** John 16:8-9

WE NEED FORGIVENESS BECAUSE WITHOUT IT WE WILL PAY FOR OUR OWN SINS. WE NEED FORGIVENESS BECAUSE GOD WANTS TO FORGIVE US AND RID US OF THE GUILT AND DREAD OF SIN. WE NEED FORGIVENESS BECAUSE LIVING A LIFE UNDER A FORGIVEN STATE IS HOW GOD INTENDS US TO FEEL HIS JOY AND POWER.

This also may be a progressive thing in people—as they become exposed to more and more of the Word, they see more and more of their sinful state and their DESPARATE need to be rescued from the guilt, the debt they owe to God. We appeal to people, as Paul and the other apostles did, to come to the cross of Jesus Christ, where forgiveness was purchased. They may or they may not do so. If they do, they receive it. The Bible tells us that COMPLETE forgiveness of all sins—not just mistakes, shortcomings, failures, weaknesses—but sins, which is what we’re poisoned by. Jesus’ payment on the cross is COMPLETELY enough to satisfy the holy God. One more verse: ***He made Him who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*** (2nd Corinthians 5:21)

Whatever else we say about forgiveness, we need to always, always keep in mind our own need of it. Before anything else, we need God’s pardon. We need His willingness to cut loose our debt, which is real, and for which we appeal to His Son’s willingness to pay OUR debt of sin.