

Daniel 9:15-19

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After confessing sin and praising God for His righteousness, Daniel asks the Lord to hear his prayer. Daniel hopes that God will spare the Jews from further punishment, and restore them to Jerusalem.

Daniel is praying. After giving praise to God, confessing sin, and expressing an accurate understanding that God is good and His people earned a severe penalty by disobeying Him, violating their treaty with God. With the word *now* Daniel transitions his prayer from confession to supplication. He has admitted the wrongs of Israel and Judah, and now he will ask God for mercy. He addresses God as *O Lord our God*, because despite the rift between God and His people, nothing can break the relationship between them. God is still Daniel's God, and Daniel is God's servant. And the Jews are still His chosen people. No amount of disobedience will change that (Rom 11:25-32).

Daniel addresses God as the one *who brought His people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand*, one who has *made a name for Himself*. In Egypt, God's people were slaves, similar to the current state of Israel and Judah. Daniel himself is a captive in Babylon and has lived most of his life as a stranger in a strange land. Yet God is a liberator, and He set the people of Israel free from Egypt with a mighty hand, through great displays of power. Until that point in history, the nations of the earth did not yet know God's power. But after the Exodus and ever since, powerful empires like Egypt and Babylon were well acquainted with the Lord's famous reputation. His name is famous to *this day*, Daniel declares. Famous to the people of Israel and Judah. Famous to Egyptians. Famous to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who wrote extensively of God's power in Daniel chapter 4, "It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me" (Daniel 4:2).

Before going any further, Daniel once again reaffirms the fault of God's people: *we have sinned, we have been wicked*. Daniel tells God He is mighty and good, and His people are the ones who failed Him. Yet, Daniel prays, *in accordance with all of God's righteous acts*, since God is so good and powerful, *let now His anger and His wrath turn away from His city Jerusalem, His holy mountain*. The *holy mountain* refers to Mt. Zion, a hill of Jerusalem, as well as being a symbol for Jerusalem itself.

Jerusalem and God's people have become a reproach to other nations. Other translations of this verse give the idea that the nations thought nothing of the Jewish people; they despised God's chosen nation. The state of Israel and Judah is so pitiful that the neighboring nations considered its people weak, insignificant, and detestable.

Daniel asks God to *listen to his prayer*, calling himself God's *servant*, for he has faithfully served God even while a captive in Babylon. Daniel makes *supplications*, humble requests that only God can answer. But Daniel frames his prayer in several different ways. If God answers Daniel's prayers, it not only helps the Jewish people, but God Himself would benefit. Daniel

begs God for His own *sake* to *let His face shine on His desolate sanctuary* (a symbol for the ruins of Jerusalem and all its captive people). Daniel repeats his requests; he asks God again to listen, because Daniel is correctly communicating from a totally humbled posture. He cannot make God do anything, even listen.

So he pleads with God to *incline His ear and hear! To open His eyes and see our desolations* as well as *the city which is called by His name* (Jerusalem). Daniel gives all glory to God, all responsibility for sin is on the people of Israel and Judah, and their discipline was just. This is why Daniel prays in such lowly and desperate terms. He knows God owes him nothing. He declares that he and his fellow Jews are not *presenting their supplications before God on account of any merits of their own*.

Daniel knows they do not deserve anything, they have not earned God's mercy or His intervention. Daniel instead appeals to God that He would hear them *on account of His great compassion*. It would be completely God's choice whether or not to bring the Jews out of exile. But God is characteristically compassionate, for which Daniel praises Him.

Daniel's prayer builds to a passionate conclusion. He asks for three things from God: *O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action!* If God will listen to Daniel's plea to forgive His people, He might then return the exiled Jews to Jerusalem.

For God's own sake, Daniel says, *do not delay*. The reason for Daniel's request for God's immediate action is that God's *city* (Jerusalem) and His *people are called by His name*. They are God's chosen people, and it would bring glory to God to restore them to the Promised Land so that they could try again to walk in obedience toward Him.

This is the basic pattern of the relationship between the Israelites and God. God leads them, they rebel, He disciplines them, they repent, He extends mercy and compassion toward them. But, as Daniel stated in verse 12, the present discipline was especially severe, that God would send a foreign king to conquer the holy city of Jerusalem and take its people as captives. Daniel hopes and prays it is finally time for this punishment to conclude, if God shows compassion and forgives His people.

It is fascinating to note that Daniel does not mention Jeremiah's prophecy during his prayer. Daniel does not say "You promised seventy years, so now it is time to deliver." As a part of approaching God in complete humility, Daniel understands that the discipline can be extended. God, the superior ruler or suzerain, is dealing with the offending vassal according to the terms of the agreement. Accordingly, Daniel petitions for mercy.

Biblical Text

15 "And now, O Lord our God, who have brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and have made a name for Yourself, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have been wicked. 16 O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have

become a reproach to all those around us. 17 So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary. 18 O my God, incline Your ear and hear! Open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Your name; for we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion. 19 O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”