

# Daniel 9:3-6

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*Daniel prays to God. He praises the Lord for His faithfulness, and confesses the sins of the Jews' disobedience.*

Daniel is praying. He is in the midst of confessing sin and asking God if the punishment toward Judah will end soon. Jeremiah the prophet prophesied that the land of Judah would be empty for seventy years and its people would live in exile (Jeremiah 25:11). Daniel is one of these exiles, and after reading Jeremiah's prophecy, he prays to God in hopes that the time of exile will end soon.

Daniel's prayer is lengthy and complex. He begins by giving his *attention to the Lord God*. His purpose is to *seek* the Lord through *prayer and supplications*. His focus in this moment is entirely on God. He distances himself from comfort. Daniel dresses in *sackcloth*, which is an itchy, irritating material. It is worn by people in mourning, people who do not wish to feel comforted, but instead wish to fully process the discomfort of their sorrow. Also, he sits in *ashes*, another way of expressing contrition or sadness. Daniel is *fasting*; he is not eating food. He gives himself nothing comforting for his body; his entire focus is on humbly speaking to God.

Daniel begins his prayer by praising God. His goal is to confess sin, but first he approaches God with all the reverence due: *O Lord, the great and awesome God*. God's character is beyond all men. He is perfectly powerful and supreme. God's integrity is also perfect, for He *keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments*.

Daniel devotes a lot of his prayer to emphasizing man's failure and God's goodness. The Jewish people have *acted wickedly*, they have *committed iniquity*. Daniel includes himself in this group, confessing that *we have sinned*. Despite all the other chapters in Daniel showing that he is a righteous man who deals honestly with men and has never wandered from his faith in God, Daniel does not portray himself as perfect. He confesses sin along with the rest of Judah and Israel. He still identifies as a Jew, and expresses that he deserves to experience the discipline God has dealt to His people for these 70 years. Daniel confesses he and his countrymen turned *aside from God's commandments and ordinances*. Daniel shows that he is a great leader; he takes responsibility. True leadership does not blame. True leadership takes responsibility without demanding control.

For centuries, the kingdoms of Israel and Judah practiced idolatry, which led to many other terrible sins. In the days of King Manasseh, the king built altars to idols in the temple, sacrificed his own son, and dealt in sorcery (2 Kings 21:2-6). The prophet Jeremiah identifies Manasseh as one of the main reasons God punished the Kingdom of Judah, "I will make them an object of horror among all the kingdoms of the earth because of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, the king of Judah, for what he did in Jerusalem" (Jeremiah 15:4). But Manasseh was not the only wicked man in Judah in those days; the nation as a whole had given itself over to worshipping idols and forsaking God.

God sent many prophets, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, to call the kingdoms to repent and ask God for forgiveness. *Moreover*, Daniel prays, *we have not listened to God's servants who are the prophets*. Daniel had watched pagan kings listen to God, while his own nation refused to heed God's words. Daniel admits their disobedience. They ignored the men through whom God spoke. They could have avoided God's punishment and walked with Him in an obedient relationship, but refused. As an example, Jeremiah was clear that if Judah's leaders would serve Babylon God would spare their lives. But they did not listen. They trusted in Egypt to protect them. As a result, Jerusalem was destroyed and they were killed (Jer 27).

The prophets *spoke in God's name to Jerusalem's kings, princes, and fathers and all the people of the land*. God was not silent. He did not throw this discipline on His people out of nowhere. Daniel knows that God spoke many times through the prophets, and everyone in the land heard God's message. From the rulers at the top to the regular citizens at the bottom, God's expectations were loud and clear. But the people chose not to listen.

### **Biblical Text**

**3 So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. 4 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 Your commandments and ordinances. 6 Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers and all the people of the land.**