

Daniel – Chapter 9

New International Version of the Holy Bible

One of the most serious conditions troubling the world in our time is a lack in so many people of the sense of personal responsibility. Men and women refuse to accept responsibility for their decisions and actions. We have an example in the treatment given to marriage. When two people are about to enter this holy estate, they are exhorted to do so with a profound sense of the seriousness of the obligations they are about to assume, bearing in mind that the vow and covenant, once made, may not be broken. Thus they have every reason to consider their action well and they take it free-willingly. Yet it often happens that after a few years or months, yes, only a few weeks - that the couple will suddenly run apart, break the vow and behave like irresponsible children who do not understand what it means to see a thing through after it has been seriously undertaken.

This evil and dangerous state of mind, moreover, is being encouraged by a prevalent philosophy which tells people: *“You are not responsible, you cannot help it!”* Criminals are excused from their crimes while the fault is laid at the door of circumstances allegedly beyond their control. If a drunken driver commits murder on the highway, some attorney will plead that the violator could not help it because drunkenness is a disease. Disobedient children, delinquent youth and their parents are excused and blame for their neglect or misdeeds is ascribed to environment, lack of proper educational

facilities or an inadequate police force. Unless responsibility for evil is placed where it belongs and accepted by the guilty, there can be no correction.

Until now, in our studies of the Book of Daniel, we have seen God's people bowed beneath much trial, persecution and danger. We looked into the fiery furnace and the den of lions and have heard prophecies of the dark days of the future. And always we were shown where such sorrows come from. We saw the world powers and the world princes in rebellion against God - Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Antiochus. While these kings trampled the soil into a bloody paste there was tribulation also for the Church. There were tyrants and traitors. But is that the whole story? Is the full measure of responsibility thus deposited where it belongs? It is well that before we close our meditations in the Book of Daniel, we should include this 9th chapter in our studies. For here a new window is opened upon the scene of the Church's struggle with evil in the world. Looking out, we see a side of the picture which has not previously been stressed.

Our sympathies and hearts remain with Daniel and his friends, with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and with the people of Israel captive in Babylon. We sorrow to see them under the heel of oppression and we stand shoulder to shoulder with them. They were our brethren in the faith, and we too are well advanced in an age where the faithful will suffer for the sake of their God and Savior at the hands of a corrupt world given to its lusts. But while we sympathize with Daniel, let us now also stand at his side while he confesses to God his

share, and the share of his people, in the responsibility for the evils that fell upon them.

In a most wonderful prayer Daniel makes a clean breast of his responsibility for the sorrows of the Church. He confesses not just the sins of others but his own as well. He does not make a speech about wicked Persia or the heathen generally. Daniel says: **“O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame - the men of Judah and people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. O Lord, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; we have not obeyed the Lord our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you. You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against**

our rulers by bringing upon us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem. Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. The Lord did not hesitate to bring the disaster upon us, for the Lord our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him. Now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day, we have sinned, we have done wrong. O Lord, In keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. Our sins and the iniquities of our fathers have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us. Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eye and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay because your city and your people bear your Name.” Daniel 9:4-19

Note well that his confession does not deal in those sanctimonious generalities which have sometimes been heard from the lips of church leaders and their followers, when their obvious lack of true repentance

labeled their confession a pious fraud. Daniel is very specific: “. . . **we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets. . .**” **Daniel 9:5-6** It was not only Nebuchadnezzar who set his face against the Lord, but Daniel and his people had done so also, in many ways. Every sin is a rebellion and every departure from the Word of God is iniquity. Both of them knew that between themselves it was useless to try to put the blame for all the trouble on outsiders. God’s people had acted wickedly and thus given Satan a purchase of his power.

Daniel very well knew that the Israelites were suffering because they had not listened to God. The Lord sent his Word unto them with fullest instruction and direction by one prophet after the other but still Israel chose to pay no attention and went its own way. Daniel accepts his share in this guilt. He did not always listen as he should have and he does not wish to blame-shift his guilt onto his parents or his teachers for his own failure.

Yet another sin is frankly exposed in this confession. **“Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth.” Daniel 9:13** Israel forgot to pray, even when under the rod. They were too satisfied with themselves, too indifferent to their weaknesses, too hardened against their crimes to seek out the mighty Power and Love that watched over them. Thus they were brought to their tragic bondage.

“O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay because your city and your people bear your Name.” Daniel 9:19 What a penitent cry is wrung from the very soul of Daniel because he is overwhelmed by the burden of responsibility for the troubles of the world.

II

How rare is the awareness of guilt in our day. Men view with alarm and regard with disgust. They say: *“Just see how things are going!”* But of course none of it is their fault. Indeed, with near-sighted spiritual vision Christians often fail to see how much of the world has actually crept into their way of life. We have grown accustomed, one fears, to the hardness of heart and mind which many display toward the Gospel to which they outwardly profess allegiance. How enriched our lives could be through the blessings that stem from Christian homes, our churches, our schools - yet how poor we sometimes seem. And the sky is growing darker over our lives by the hour. Is it merely because the world is so evil? We like to think that and consider the matter closed. Let us stop being irresponsible children and face the facts.

We have rebelled, in heart and mind. It is like a blight upon us that we so readily desire to be called Christian without living like Christians. We want our God’s name but we are reluctant to honor it. We have wanted to have things our own way which so often has proved to be the way of the flesh and not of the spirit. Let each self examine to see

whether this is not true. Surely it is evident that Christian people are not always strangers to cursing, drunkenness and indecency. They have not always been above helping to keep corrupt people rich by buying corrupt wares. They have not always been innocent of providing the support which keeps smut and filth on the news stands, furthering the proliferation of the modern orgiastic, wildly insane dance habits of a depraved society and helping along to keep gamblers and all forms of vice and greed in the entertainment business operational. Is this of no concern to us?

How well have we hearkened unto the prophets? The sun itself does not shine more clearly than does the Word of God upon our homes and from our pulpits. Yet by the large there is so little real knowledge or appreciation of what it says. Multitudes of confessional orthodox people are more uninformed about the teachings of God's Word than are their enemies, the false prophets and the errorists.

It is to be feared that the Christian life today is very short of prayer. There is praying, of course - but one who searches the heart must ask how much of it is routine. How much prayer is babbling and not true and full communion with God? Have we truly rested in the lap of our God as His dear children? If we all had always kept close to God then truly there would be a greater degree of peace for the church on earth.

In Hosea it is clearly spoken by God: **"Your sins have been your downfall!" Hosea 14:1** Let us not say: *"Where shall we put the blame*

for the state of affairs on earth?” Surely a curse must fall upon the minds and hearts which refuse to assume due responsibility.



To say: *“The fault is ours, O Lord – we have sinned!”* does not in itself magically better the world’s circumstance. Indeed, circumstances in the world seem worse when God’s children must confess that they have been a contributing cause. At the same time, however, the only hope and peace that can be found will be ours when we have been brought to our knees in repentance and confession, as Daniel was.

Before Daniel had finished praying an answer came from heaven. Gabriel, the archangel of God, a high servant of the Most High, is dispatched to visit the weeping man and tells him that he, Gabriel, was sent at the very onset of Daniel’s prayer. In the moment that Daniel fell upon his knees to confess his responsibility, his sin, God turned to him with help.

That which outwardly and characteristically separates the Church and its member from the world is not a lack of personal guilt, but genuine contrition and confession of sin. Were we to fail in this, we would have become partners with the world and risk a share in the final destruction. Our mark of distinction is the Spirit-wrought knowledge of responsibility and guilt out of which our hearts turn to God crying: **“O Lord, forgive!” Daniel 9:19**

Our confession and prayers may not put an end to our trials. But the Lord assures us of his mercy and tells us, as He told Daniel: “. . . **for you are highly esteemed.**” **Daniel 9:23** The Lord gives us an understanding that there will be an end of all tribulation. We are comforted in the promise of Messiah and of the triumphant course of his redeeming work. We are comforted by his gift of righteousness in which we shall welcome our final redemption and eternity.

In his grave, Daniel today awaits that hour. We, before whose eyes Christ has so manifestly been set forth (as the Apostle said) abide without fear the time when we shall lift up our heads at last. But while we are still here, let us labor the more to save what is to be saved and to undo what we may of any neglect which must be charged to us. Confessing and forsaking our sins, judgment shall not begin in us; instead, in our day, there shall be mercy, help and strength in time of need.