

Daniel's Prayer of Confession and Repentance

When you think about prayer, I want you to not think about not some request that you made to God. When you think about prayer, think about simply talking to God. So when you say, "I am praying to God," what you are really saying is "I am talking to God." That is a simple explanation of prayer. We are going to talk about talking to God.

Somebody has counted all of the prayers in the Bible. You might be surprised how many prayers there are in the Bible! There are about 650 prayers. They found a prayer in every book of the Bible except for the Song of Solomon. There are prayers about praise, thanksgiving, and petitions. There are prayers for salvation.

There are prayers about confession of sin. Our study is about a prayer dealing with the confession of sin. In the study, Daniel is going to talk to God and confess his sins and the sins of Israel.

The study is from Daniel 9:1-19. We are not going to finish the chapter.

We are going to split it into several studies. Open your Bible to Daniel 9:1.

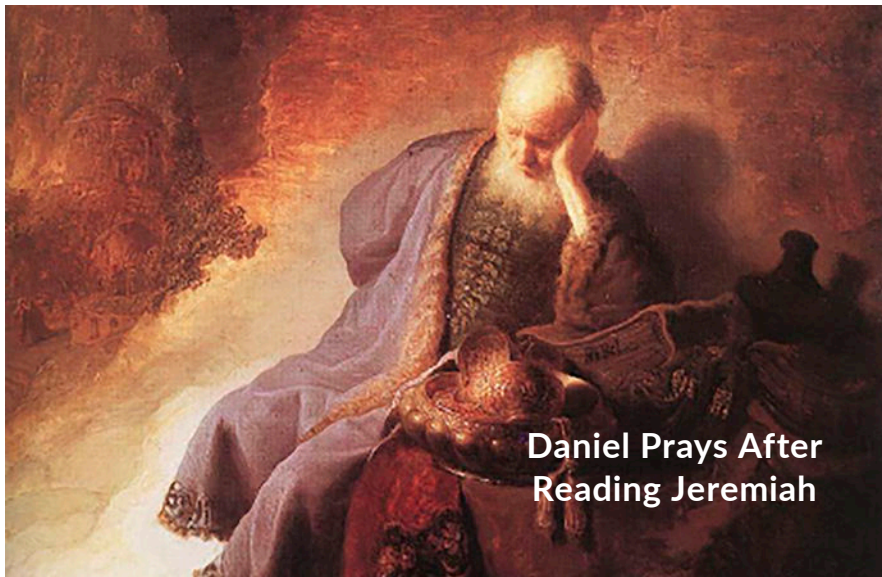
In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans — in the first year of his reign . . . Daniel 9:1-2a (NASB)

Daniel has been giving us time markers since chapter 5. Here we are told this event is in the first year of Darius. Verse 2 explains "the first year of Darius" refers to "the first year of his

reign." We have already discovered that the kings of the Babylonian Empire marked their reigns a little differently than you and I would normally count the years of a king's reign. The Babylonians counted the very first year a king sat on the throne as his ascension year. He did not begin his reign until the second year. So the second year a king sat on the throne was referred to as the first year of his reign. The third year that he sat on the throne was called his second year of the reign etc.

So when verse 1 refers to the first year of Darius reign, it is really the second year he has been sitting on the throne. From

the standpoint of dating this chapter, that would mean that these events follow those in Daniel 6. In chapter 5, the Babylonian Empire fell to the Medo-Persian Empire—that is, the Medes and the Persians achieved victory. Chapter 6 was the beginning of the shared reigns of



Daniel Prays After Reading Jeremiah

Cyrus and Darius. So we conclude then that the date here is 539 B.C., in the reign of Darius, the Medo-Persian king.

This is important because this means Daniel is roughly eighty years old at this point. We made the point earlier in Daniel 1 that Daniel was about thirteen or fourteen years of age. That was typically when the Babylonians started training their youth. So when we arrive at Daniel 9, seventy years has elapsed. Daniel is about eighty years old, maybe even eighty-three. Daniel has lived a long life.

The rest of verse 2 states,

And I, Daniel ... Daniel 9:2b (NASB)

Clearly Daniel is speaking.

... 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, a seventy years. Daniel 9:2c (NASB)

We are told Daniel was reading the books or the scrolls. He was reading Scripture because he tells us that they “revealed as the word of the Lord.” He is reading Scripture from scrolls and we are told explicitly that he is reading Jeremiah and discovered that Jeremiah the prophet said, “for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely seventy years.”

Daniel reads that the desolation of Jerusalem would last for about seventy years. When the book of Jeremiah refers to the desolation of Jerusalem, it is really talking about the captivity of the Israelites in the city of Babylon.

So when Daniel read that the captivity was to last seventy years, what do you think was on Daniel’s mind? He may have been wondering when he might be able to return to Jerusalem. So Daniel is interested. Turn to the book of Jeremiah because I would like you to see the prophecy. There are two passages that talk about the desolation, or the seventy years. The first one is Jeremiah 25:8-12. It says,

Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Because you have not obeyed My words ... Jeremiah 25:8 (NASB)

Jeremiah wrote that God said, “Because you have not obeyed My words.” That is the reason the Israelites were taken into captivity. They did not obey.

Verse 9 tells us what God was going to do using King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

“... behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will send to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them and make them a horror and a

hissing, and an everlasting desolation.’” Jeremiah 25:9 (NASB)

This stunning verse says that God was going to make Jerusalem desolate because they have disobeyed. Verse 11 tells us how long this is will take to occur. It says,

This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Jeremiah 25:11 (NASB)

How long is the desolation going to occur? How long will the captivity last? It was going to last for seventy years. Verse 12 adds,

“Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,’ declares the LORD, ‘for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation.’” Jeremiah 25:12 (NASB)

Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Israelites in 605 B.C. and Belshazzar the last Babylonian king in 539 B.C. Belshazzar was the king to whom God referred when He said, “I will punish the king of Babylon.”

The last part of the verse says,

“And that nation declares the Lord for their iniquity and the land of the Chaldeans, and I will make it an everlasting desolation.”

So we have the picture. We have discovered a pattern that God uses with nations. God says, “You have disobeyed me, so the king of the Neo-Babylonians, King Nebuchadnezzar, is going to make Jerusalem desolate.” Then the king destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple. He deported people in three different campaigns (605, 597, and 568 B.C.). Then God said, “And when the seventy years is over, I am going to punish King Nebuchadnezzar.”

We have seen a pattern. God uses one nation to punish another nation because of the first nation’s wickedness. Then if the first nation commits iniquity in the process, God will punish that nation. God is just and deals with sin. So Jeremiah prophesied about what was going to happen. He told the Jews

how long their deportation would last — seventy years. This occurred in roughly 605 B.C. Jeremiah prophesied just before the Babylonian army invaded the land and destroyed the city and temple.

Jeremiah 29:8-10 is another statement with regard to the deportation of seventy years.

“For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream. For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them,’ declares the LORD. For thus says the LORD, ‘When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.’” Jeremiah 29:8-10 (NASB)

So what did God do? He said, “You have sinned, and so you are going to suffer. Here is how long you are going to suffer. But I want to give you some hope. You are going to be in exile for seventy years. When it is over, then you are going to come back.” God punishes for sin, and yet He cared enough for Israel that He tells them they are going to return to their land. That is compassion. We have a God who cares about how we feel.

Go back to Daniel 9, and I will show you a couple of points. Jeremiah’s first prophecy occurred in 605 B.C. That was the beginning of the seventy-year captivity. At the end of the captivity, the date was 535 B.C. 535 B.C. is when the captives started returning. The date of Daniel 9 is 538 B.C. That means there was only a three year difference between the end of the seventy years of captivity and the date of this chapter. Three years difference! Daniel wanted to know if the deportation was really going to be returning.

Notice three things in this passage. First, Daniel endorsed Jeremiah as a prophet of God and an author of Scripture. This is terrific. In addition, Jesus endorsed all of the Old Testament. He endorsed the major divisions of the Hebrew Bible since He endorsed Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets. That is, Jesus endorsed all of the Old Testament. Jesus and the apostles authenticated the Old and New Testaments. Therefore, it is just terrific to see that Daniel affirmed Jeremiah as a prophet

who wrote Scripture. The book of Jeremiah is Scripture.

The second thing I want you to notice is that when Daniel read about the seventy years in Jeremiah, he understood it literally and not allegorically or symbolically. We interpret Scripture historically, grammatically, and literally. We have to understand the history in order to understand the Old Testament. We also must study the language. We need to understand the language so we can really understand what the passage is trying to tell us. Finally, we must understand Scripture literally. The emergent church movement says, “As you read Scripture, its meaning is whatever it means to you.” They downplay the literalness of Scripture. There are others who also understand Scripture symbolically or allegorically. As soon as someone does that, Scripture can be changed into anything you want it to mean. I have books in my library where authors take that approach. If you compare their interpretations, you discover there are wide variations of the interpretations. Why? Because they did not understand and interpret Scripture literally. When Daniel read about the seventy years of captivity, he understood it literally. That is a fabulous statement of truth. Daniel did not understand Jeremiah allegorically or symbolically.

The third important thing to take away is that this godly man was reading Scripture. He was reading Jeremiah. He said that he “observed in the books the number of the years which is revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem.” What did we see already in Daniel 6 that Daniel was doing? Praying! Now in chapter 9, Daniel will be praying and confessing his sins and the sins of Israel. Have you ever had a pastor tell you that you needed to not only read Scripture, but to pray and confess your sins? Pastors urge us to do that because it is important.

Daniel 9:3 says,

So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. Daniel 9:3 (NASB)

When it says “supplications,” that just means Daniel planned to make some requests. Fasting and sackcloth were signs of humility. Fasting could include not eating at all, or not eating

certain foods. Sometimes it was a total fast, sometimes it was a partial fast. Sackcloth was intentionally scratchy material. When I was a kid, I discovered that I have an allergy to wool. When I tried to wear wool pants, they scratched my legs. I felt like I was going crazy! Sackcloth can irritate. When people would fast, wearing sackcloth was an act of self-denial. In addition, who wants to put ashes all over yourself? But this was done as an act of humility and a sign that the person was serious.

As Daniel had been reading in Jeremiah about the seventy years, he realized that the seventy years was just about completed. So he asked a question.

Verse 4 states,

I prayed to the LORD my God . . . Daniel 9:4a (NASB)

Verse 4 is the beginning of Daniel praising our God. The rest of this prayer can be outlined in four parts. Verse 4 praises God. Verses 5-10 confesses the guilt of Israel. Verses 11-14 acknowledges God's justice in dealing with Israel, and the last set of verses, 15-19, are Daniel's requests of God on behalf of Israel.

I just like the fact that he said "my God." He did not pray to Marduk, Allah, or to Baal. He did not pray to some nebulous false god or demon. His prayer was personal, to "my God." Daniel's prayer reflects his relationship with God.

I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed . . .

Note that the word "confessed" is what this prayer is all about—it is Daniel's confession.

. . . 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 . . ." Daniel 9:4b (NASB)

I just like the way Daniel praises God! He says, "great and awesome God." I knew a man who every time you asked him what God was like, he would say, "awesome!" His frequent use of "awesome" was repetitious - like a record that had a scratch on it! To him, God was awesome!

Who keeps "His covenants." What does that mean? God

is faithful. You can count on God. He is always lovingly present. God is loving. And then Daniel said, "for those who love Him and keep His commandments." Remember Moses said in Deuteronomy 10:12-13, that God wants us to love Him and do what? Keep His commandments. Jesus said in John 14:15,

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. John 14:15 (NASB)

1 John 5:3 says the same thing. He says it a little differently, but he makes the point that those who keep His commandments demonstrate that they love Him. So this is both an Old Testament and New Testament theme. Daniel is recognizing this.

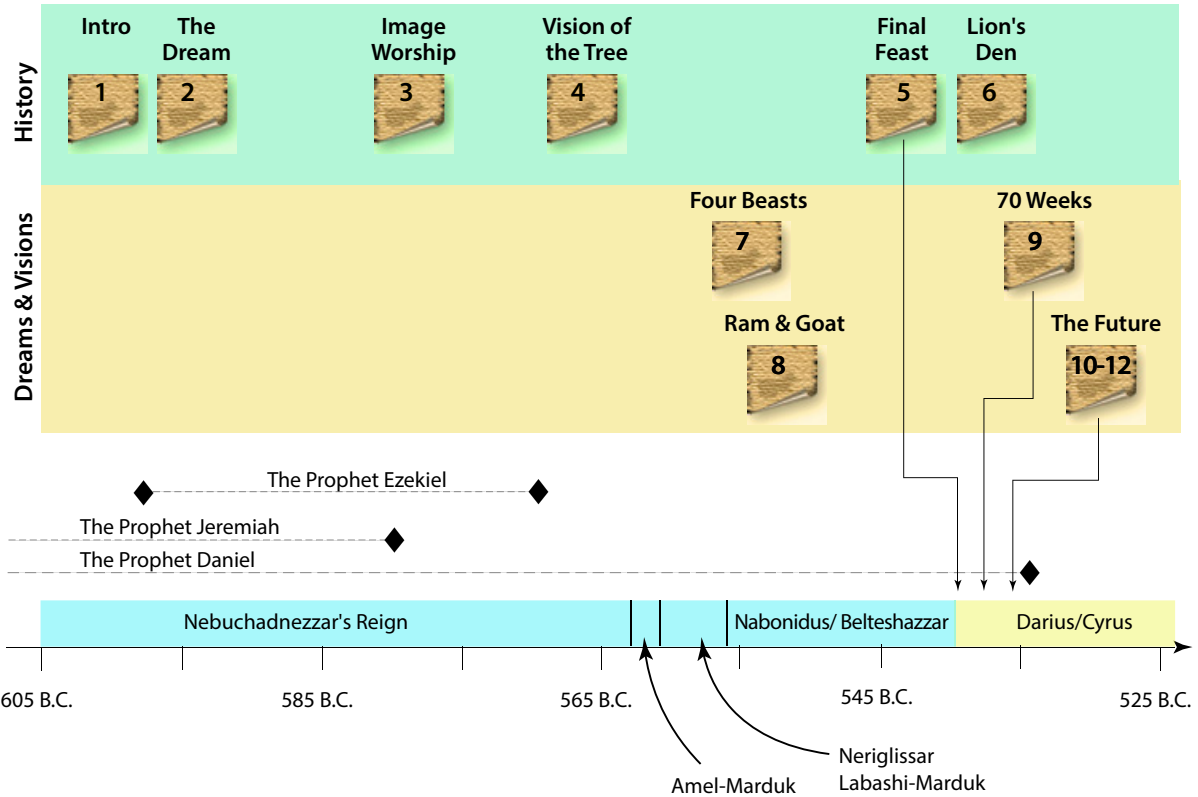
Verse 5 now is about the guilt of Israel. Daniel starts the confession. Verse 4 was the adoration of God, the praise of God. In fact, if you are thinking about praying to God remember to start by praising and thanking God. Verse 5 says,

We have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. Daniel 9:5 (NASB)

What did Daniel do here? Daniel said they had sinned a lot. They had committed iniquity, acted wickedly, and rebelled. He said they had turned away from God's commandments and ordinances. Did you notice what Daniel did when he prays? It is interesting that he does not say "the Israelites did it, but not me." Instead He said, "we." Daniel identified with the nation of Israel which had acted wickedly, sinned, committed iniquity, rebelled, and turned aside from God's commandments and ordinances. He did not have a pride problem. What would you have done in Daniel's place? We would not want to be connected to these people who God punished. We would not want to say, "I did what they did." Daniel says, "we." He includes himself. Daniel is a man of humility, and he identifies with their sin. What did they do? The answer is explained in 2 Chronicles 24:15-19, and also 2 Kings 23. You will discover that they worshiped all kinds of gods. They totally abandoned the true God.

Verse 6:

Outline of Daniel



Copyright © Like The Master Ministries. All Rights Reserved.

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. Daniel 9:6 (NASB)

He says, “We even ignored your prophets.” I want you to see
 this. In Isaiah 6:8, God asked Isaiah to become His prophet.
 Isaiah 6:8 says,

Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, “Whom shall I send,
 and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I. Send me!”
 Isaiah 6:8 (NASB)

Now we discover that God was calling Daniel to speak on His
 behalf. Verse 10 adds,

Render the hearts of this people insensitive,

Their ears dull,
 And their eyes dim,
 Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
 Hear with their ears,
 Understand with their hearts,
 And return and be healed.”
 Then I said, “Lord, how long?”
 Isaiah 6:10-11a (NASB)

In other words, what Isaiah said was, “Lord, I am supposed to
 go, and I am supposed to speak. They are not going to listen,
 hear, perceive, understand, or respond. How long am I sup-
 posed to do this, Lord?”

God told him in verses 11-12,

Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant,

Houses are without people
And the land is utterly desolate,
The LORD has removed men far away,
And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.
Isaiah 6:11b-12 (NASB)

For how long? Until no one was left. Can you imagine the success of that prophet? Put that prophet in a church today as pastor. He is supposed to speak and teach until everybody leaves. What kind of success is that? Most of us would say it is time to fire that pastor, right? Everybody will eventually leave the church. That is what God told Isaiah to do: “Go and speak on My behalf until everybody is gone. Then you are finished. Then your job is done.” We have to include verse 13. God says,

Yet there will be a tenth portion in it . . .
Isaiah 6:13 (NASB)

In other words, God said there will be a few left, a tenth. Can you imagine that 90 percent of his congregation was to leave, and then God would say “that is what you are supposed to do, Isaiah.”

Isaiah 30:8 explains why. Here is the problem that Israel had. God said this to Isaiah,

Now go, write it on a tablet before them
And inscribe it on a scroll,
That it may serve in the time to come
As a witness forever.
For this is a rebellious people, false sons,
Sons who refuse to listen
To the instruction of the LORD;
Who say to the seers, “You must not see visions”;
And to the prophets, “You must not prophesy to us what is right,
Speak to us pleasant words,
Prophesy illusions.
Get out of the way, turn aside from the path,
Let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.” Isaiah 30:8-11
(NASB)

Do you know what the people were saying in other words? “God, you are supposed to just give us prophets who will say nice things. Make us feel good. Speak illusions to us. Prophesy nice things to us.” It reminds me of a woman who complained one day about a preacher. It is a true story. She complained about a preacher because he was not always positive. That is the key statement: Was ... Not ... Always ... Positive. And I said, “What is wrong with him not always being positive?” She said, “Where I am at in my life right now, I just need encouragement. I do not need to hear about negative things. I do not need to hear that I am a sinner. I just need to be lifted up Sunday after Sunday, that is what I need. So I am going to find another pastor.” She was like these people: “Speak to us pleasant words, prophesy illusions.” What a people! They were not really interested in God. They wanted to design their own God to worship.

So what did God do? God judged them. Do you realize what God did with the prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah? God was showing the Israelites compassion. Can I ask you an important question? When God tells you that He expects you to do something, do you take it as a threat? Do you consider His request to be an obligation or duty? Do you think God is just waiting to smash you like a cosmic killjoy? Is that your idea of God? If so, let me change your perspective. God was showing them compassion by warning them. God did not want to discipline them. When God tells us to do something, He is showing us compassion.

Now Daniel 9:7,

Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame . . .
Daniel 9:7a (NASB)

I found this to be really interesting. Daniel says, “Righteousness belongs to you, God, 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 You have driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against You.
Daniel 9:7b (NASB)

Daniel prayed about Jerusalem and about Judah. He prayed for Israel, and everyone who was not in Israel who had been scattered everywhere. He prayed for everybody who had caused shame, and been unfaithful. He said, “because we have been unfaithful, we have open shame.”

Verse 8 states,

Open shame belongs to us . . . Daniel 9:8a (NASB)

Now he includes the leaders. He said,

Open shame belongs to us, O LORD, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. Daniel 9:8 (NASB)

Daniel was talking about sin. Verse 9-10:

To the Lord . . .

The Hebrew word for Lord here is Adonai.

To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him; 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. Daniel 9:9-10 (NASB)

So Daniel said in effect “We are really guilty.” This is a confession of guilt. He said, “We have disobeyed. We have sinned. We have committed iniquity. We have rebelled. We have not kept your commandments or your ordinances.” He said that all the people and all the leaders had sinned. From verses five through ten have all been an admission of guilt and shame.

Now there is a shift in verse 11. Now he justified God’s actions. He said,

Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice . . . Daniel 9:11a (NASB)

Do you see how many times Daniel confessed the sins of Israel as his own sin? Most of us would not want to own the sins of our nation as our own. He said,

. . . 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. Daniel 9:11b (NASB)

If you are wondering what law, Deuteronomy 28:7 and 10 explain to what Daniel referred. In the passage, God actually said, “If you will do this, I will bless you.” God listed many different ways in which the Israelites will be blessed. Then starting in verse 17 God said, “If you will not obey me, I will do this to you.” God then provided a long list of things that would result in punishment to the end of the chapter. So God warned them.

When God warned them, He expressed compassion. How could that be compassion? Why didn’t God just let them sin and get away with it? Then God would not have been holy. He would not have had a standard of holiness. God would not have been just. That is not the God of the Bible. The God of the Old Testament is not any different than the God of the New Testament. We are told in Scripture that God does not change; He is always the same. The reason that God warned them was that He was showing them compassion so that they did not have to suffer. They had a choice.

Verse 12 continues with,

Thus He has confirmed His words . . . Daniel 9:12a (NASB)

I like Daniel’s statement. It means that God is faithful. God warned them. They sinned. God put them into captivity. God kept His word. He confirmed His word.

. . . which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what was done to Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Your truth. Daniel 9:12b-13 (NASB)

Now watch verse 14. You need to see this.

Therefore the LORD has kept the calamity in store and brought

it on us; for the LORD our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice.
Daniel 9:14 (NASB)

Did you catch Daniel's statement, "He has kept calamity in store"? That means God saw their sin. He waited. He warned them and warned them. God was not quick to act to discipline. God is not eager to make us suffer. If you think God is quick to punish us, then you have the wrong view of God. You do not have Daniel's God. That is not the God Daniel worshiped. God gives us a lot of rope. We are similar in the way in which we discipline our children. Like the baseball rule, on the "third strike", we discipline them. Eventually God says, "I have been really gracious. I have been compassionate. I have been very merciful. Now it is time. I have to do something because you are continuing to sin and I am a holy God." Daniel said, "Therefore, the Lord has kept the calamity in store." That is, He had been storing up the punishment. Eventually God punishes us because we would not quit disobeying!

Periodically I have people ask, "How can I stop sinning?" At first I am excited about the question, because I think the person asked because they love God and want to obey Him. Unfortunately, Paul tells us that no matter how hard we try, we will never be totally free from sin. We never will be sinless. We can sin less and less, but we will never be sinless. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says God has given us a way of escape. The verse states,

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:13 (NASB)

God says that He is going to allow a temptation into our lives, and He has provided the way for us to escape so that we do not sin. If you are a Christian, you are now a slave of righteousness. God says that He has given us a way to escape. So if you go ahead and sin, do not blame God, do not blame anybody else; just blame yourself. You are completely responsible. Is it possible for us to increasingly have victory over sin so we

are sinning less and less, and not like what we are currently experiencing?

Look at Galatians 5:16. I want you to see this; it is important. Galatians 5:16 says,

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. Galatians 5:16 (NASB)

What is the desire of the flesh? If you were to answer the question, what would you say is the desire of the flesh? Verse 19 says,

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality . . . Galatians 5:19 (NASB)

Take immorality, impurity, sensuality together, they cover every kind of sexual sin, sexual thoughts and feelings - whatever they might be. Then verse 20 adds,

. . . idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions . . . Galatians 5:20 (NASB)

Paul used many different words to refer to every kind of interpersonal conflict and struggle in verse 21,

. . . envying, drunkenness, carousing . . . Galatians 5:21 (NASB)

The message of verse 16 is that if you walk by the Spirit, you will not be guilty of this behavior. It said if we are walking by the Spirit, we will not be constantly sinning. So when somebody asks, "How can I stop sinning?" I like to take them to this verse and say, "Do you know what the key is to not sinning? The key is to understand what it means to walk by the Spirit." Walking by the Spirit is a moment-by-moment filling of the Spirit. How do we do that?

Here is the answer. In order to be filled by the Spirit, we need to be in the word of God constantly. We need to be praying and confessing our sins. If you are doing that faithfully, day-by-day, then you will be filled by the Spirit moment-by-moment. As you continue being filled by the Spirit moment-by-moment, you will be walking in the Spirit, and having

victory over sin. Now that is really important to understand.

I hope this has been helpful to you, and I pray that you understand that as you spend time in Scripture, as you are praying and faithfully confessing your sin, that is the key to having victory over sin in your life.

