

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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Take your Bibles and turn to Daniel chapter 9, and when you've found it, look up here and let me tell you that this God-blessed America of ours is at a crossroads. Back in the year 2000, we had an election, and we went through a thirty-six day ordeal, and we found out that our nation is divided. Almost split 50-50. And then came September the 11th, 2001, when we found out that we as a nation were under assault by a deadly, cruel, and merciless enemy. And we saw that we had come into a time of a clash of civilizations and world values. I say again, we are at a crossroads, we are in a crisis, and we dare not be lackadaisical. Frances Schaeffer said, "One of these days soon if we do not change, we're going to wake up and find the America that we once knew, gone."

Now I'm not going to bring a pessimistic message. We're going to disabuse ourselves of pessimism. But we're going to get serious this morning. I'm talking to you about prayer for America. Prayer for America, a revival prayer. Our greatest resource is prayer. Our only hope is God. Do you believe that? I hope you believe that with all of your heart.

Now, the Scripture that we're going to look at, let me give you the background for it. God's people had been taken captive by the Babylonians. By the way, Babylon was the ancient name for modern day Iraq. They'd been taken captive. And Daniel now is praying to the Lord and asking God for deliverance. You say, "What does that have to do with America?" Ladies and gentlemen, this God-blessed nation of ours has been taken captive by the world, the flesh, and the devil. And we need a national, moral, and spiritual revival, and without that there is no hope. Only prayer can hold back the judgment of God. The raging waters of God's wrath are furiously beating upon the dam of His mercy.

Now God is a merciful God, if we do not pray, we're going to get directly, exactly what we deserve. Now I want you to notice the kind of prayer that God answers. First of all, we are to **pray with serious concentration**. Look in Daniel chapter 9 verse 3. Daniel says, "*And I set my face, unto the Lord God.*" Have you ever set your face? Ever said, "Dear God, I'm going to pray with every inch, every ounce, every nerve, every sinew?" "*I set my face to seek by prayer and supplications with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.*" Now we pray, but much of our prayer has little effect because it's not the arithmetic of our prayers, how many. It's not the rhetoric of our prayers, how eloquent. It's not the geometry of our prayers, how long. It is not the emotion of our prayers, how sweet. It is not the logic of our prayers, how argumentative. Friend, it is the faith and fervency of our prayers.

And when we talk about the nation, we must talk first about the house of God. For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God. We as a church need to repent. Churches across America are playing church. We pray without fasting, we witness without tears, we give without sacrifice. Is it any wonder that we sow without reaping? We need God in America again, and prayer is the order of the day.

But not just any prayer, listen to me, prayer and fasting. Prayer and fasting. Does that seem odd to you? Does that seem like somehow it is fanatical; that we in this twenty-first century should pray and fast? Jesus said, “*When you fast,*” not if you fast, but when you fast. Matthew chapter 6 and verse 5, Jesus is talking about prayer, and He says, “*And when thou prayest, thou shall not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.*” Jesus is saying, don’t pray to be seen of men. But then He says in verse 16 of the same chapter, “*Moreover,*” now He links prayer and fasting,” *moreover, when you fast, be not as the hypocrites of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward.*” Our Lord didn’t say, “If you fast,” He says, “*When you fast.*”

Leonard Ravenhill said that, “The church has gone from its upper room with its fire, to its supper room with its smoke.” Now I’m not against fellowships. Matter of fact, if you study the history of the Bible you’re going to find out that God had His great feast days. When we meet together at the throne of God, we’re going to come to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And our Lord is constantly saying to His children, “Come and dine, come and dine.” But I want to tell you, there’s also fasting that is mentioned in the Bible. Now, your Pastor is calling you to fast and to pray; to fast and pray for America, and to fast and pray for the church. We are to pray.

Now what is fasting? Fasting is not merely going without food. Fasting is going without food, and water sometimes, for a spiritual purpose. It is not dieting. It is not cutting down on our eating for health sake, though we ought to do that. Somebody said, “We live off of half of what we eat; the doctor lives off the other half.” What is fasting? Fasting is giving up food and water and certain pleasures for a spiritual purpose. It’s like a spiritual string tied around your finger, and every hunger pain is a reminder to pray and to seek the face of God. God always links fasting with spiritual activities. The Bible speaks of fasting and prayer. Fasting and watching. Fasting and worshipping.

Now, why should you fast? What is the motivation for fasting? Why should I, as a Pastor, call you to fasting and prayer? Well Daniel prayed. His prayer was a concentrated prayer. It was a prayer with fasting in sackcloth and ashes. Sackcloth and ashes speak of humility before God.

Now, what is the motivation for fasting? The “why” is as important as the “what.” It is possible to fast for the wrong reasons. Remember what I told you before, or what Jesus said, “*Don’t fast to be seen of men.*” Now there are certain things that you have to be aware of when you fast. Number one is self-centeredness, that you want to boast about the fact that you are fasting. Jesus warned about giving money in public to be seen of men. Jesus warned about praying in public to be seen of men. And Jesus warns about fasting to be seen of men. He doesn’t mean that we cannot pray in public. He does not mean that we cannot give in public. He does not mean that we cannot fast in public. As a matter of fact, in the Bible, there were public fasts

that were called for, but don't be like a Pharisee. Remember in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 18 verse 11 and 12, the Pharisee in the temple? Stuck out his chest and began to brag about himself and said, "I fast twice a week." But he didn't know anything about justice and mercy and forgiveness. Avoid exhibitionism. Avoid self-centeredness. Avoid legalism. Don't get the idea that you can buy a blessing by fasting. If any of us have a blessing, it's going to be because of God's grace and God's mercy.

I know that the devil has abused this thing of fasting. And that's the reason we don't hear much about it in the modern church anymore. Because we are fasting but for the wrong motivation. Fasting is to be done unto the Lord. Put this in your margin, Zechariah chapter 7 and verse 5, "*Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, 'When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even these seventy years,'*" now here's the question, "*did ye all fast even unto Me?*" We fast unto the Lord.

Now I said America's in a crisis. Christianity today, our modern American Christianity, is at a crossroads. What can fasting do? Well, **fasting will strengthen your prayer life**. Put down Joel chapter 2 verse 12, "*Therefore also now,' saith the Lord, 'turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.'*" You want to turn to God? One of the ingredients of turning to God is fasting.

Put down Jeremiah chapter 29 and verse 13, "*And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me,*" now listen to this, "*with all your heart.*" Half-hearted praying is an abomination to God. Heaven bends an ear when we pray with fasting. When we fast we're giving Heaven notice that we're serious; that we are seeking God with all of our heart. Listen, fasting strengthens prayer. And because it does, **it holds back judgment**.

I've told you. And preachers across America are telling us. We are ripe for judgment. But if we fast and pray, God will hold back the judgment that we deserve. Put in your margin Jonah chapter 3 verse 5, "*So the people of Nineveh believed God and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.*" Now Jonah had come to Nineveh, and he'd preached judgment. But the people had rather have forgiveness. And so they proclaimed a fast. They humbled themselves before God. And God stayed the judgment that Nineveh was due. Jonah chapter 3 verse 10, "*And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way,*" now listen, "*and God repented of the evil that He had said He would do unto them, and He did it not.*" God said to Nineveh, "I'm going to judge you." Nineveh said, "No Lord. We will fast and pray." And God says, "Very well then, I will not judge you."

Now Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. It was ripe for judgment. Put this in your heart and in you mind: God had rather show mercy than judgment. God wants to forgive. God wants to show mercy. Have we crossed a deadline in America? Is it too late for our nation? No, absolutely not. Jeremiah chapter 18 verses 7 and 8, listen

to this, God says, “*At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down and destroy it? If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.*” God says, “If I prophesy judgment, if judgment is there, I’m going to bring judgment, but if that nation will turn, if that nation will seek my face, then I will turn from the judgment that I sought to bring to them.” Put down Exodus chapter 32 verse 14. The Bible says here, “*And the Lord repented of the evil, repented of the evil, which He thought to do unto the people.*” The people of Israel needed judgment, but God repented of the evil. Now repentance means a change of mind. God changed His mind. Put down this Scripture, Psalm 106 verse 23, “*Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses, His chosen stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath lest He should destroy them.*” May God give us some more like Moses who will stand in the gap, who will stand in the breach, who will pray and say, “Oh God, God have mercy upon America!” Friend, we are in a cosmic battle and our weapon is prayer.

I love what Ron Dunn had to say about prayer. He said, “Prayer is like a missile. It can fly at the speed of sound. It can reach any target anywhere, and there is no anti-ballistic missile that can shoot it down.” We need to understand that God has prayer.

How, then, should we fast? Well, first of all, **examine your motivation**. Why do you do it? Ask God about your fast. Don’t let me tell you to fast, and that settles it. Pray to God, and ask God. Isaiah chapter 58 verse 6, “*Is not this the fast that I have chosen?*” You pray about it, and ask God what he would have you to do. Prayerfully, choose your fast.

Avoid extremism. Don’t say, “Well, I’m going to fast for X number of days,” if you’re not, if you’re not used to fasting. Set aside a day. Set aside just one day to fast. And find a day when your activities are light. Plan ahead of time that you’re going too fast. A one-day fast is a good beginning. And if you’re sick, or under medication, or if you’re pregnant, then I would talk to the doctor before you fast. But don’t strut, don’t brag, but don’t be ashamed of the fact that you’re fasting. What I’m trying to say is this: we are to pray with concentration, concentration. Get it in your heart and in your mind. Too many of us have a take it or leave it attitude toward prayer. Many of us rattle off our prayers and could not, an hour later, tell you what we prayed for.

Now here’s the second way that we’re going to learn from Daniel. Not only are we to pray with serious concentration, but we are to **pray with steadfast confidence**. Confidence in who? In Almighty God. Face your problem, but focus on your God. Daniel set his face with sackcloth and ashes and fasting to pray. But he did it with a great confidence.

Look in Daniel chapter 9 verse 4, “*And I prayed unto the Lord, my God, and made my confession, and said, ‘Oh Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant*

and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that fear His commandments.” Daniel knew that God was dreadful, but He was great and full of mercy.

Then skip on down to Daniel chapter 9 verse 9, *“To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him.”* Isn’t that wonderful? Isn’t that wonderful that to God belongs mercies and forgiveness? The basis of our prayer is the greatness of God, and the mercy of God. It is impossible to see the greatness of God and the mercies of God and not pray with confidence.

The basis of Daniel’s prayer, listen, was the shed blood of Jesus Christ. You say, “Well, I don’t see that there.” Read Daniel chapter 9 verses 20 and 21, *“And while I was speaking and praying and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of God, yea, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning being caused to fly swiftly,”* now watch this, *“touched me about the time of the evening oblation.”* Now underscore that, *“he touched me about the time of the evening oblation.”* What was the evening oblation? It was when a sacrifice was made in the temple of God. Now pay attention. When Daniel prayed this, there had been no temple for 70 years! The temple was destroyed, and yet Daniel is looking back to a sacrifice that was made 70 years ago in about the time of the evening oblation. When was this evening oblation anyway? Well, the evening oblation was the same time that Jesus died upon the cross. Evening oblation was about from 3 to 4 p.m. In the New Testament it is called the ninth hour. Now here is Daniel; he’s looking back to the time of the evening oblation. I remind you that he’s looking backward to a sacrifice. When we pray today we look backward to bloody Calvary. Because when Daniel prayed, not only was he looking backward, he was looking forward. Every Old Testament sacrifice was a picture and a prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ, who would one day hang in agony and blood upon the cross. The plain message is this: that it is the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, that cleanseth us from all iniquity.

But we must pray with confidence. Do you have confidence that God can save us as a nation, do you? Do you have confidence that God can change your life? Can you have confidence that we can have that victory in Jesus that we sing about, or is it just a song? All of the Old Testament offerings pointed to Jesus. And I don’t stutter or stammer when I tell you that. Pray! Pray with concentration. Pray with confidence.

Number three: **pray with sincere confession**, sincere confession. Look in Daniel chapter 9 verses 4 through 7, *“And I prayed unto the Lord, my God, and made my confession,”* underscore that, *“and made my confession and said, Oh Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments. We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled even by departing from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments. Neither have we hearkened unto Thy servants, the prophets, which spake in Thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. Oh, Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us, confusion of faces, as at this*

day, to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near and that are far off, through all the countries whither Thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against Thee.” Sin brings judgment; confession brings forgiveness. Now we must confess.

And then look if you will in Daniel chapter 9 and verse 20, “*And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin,*” now watch this, “*and the sin of my people Israel,*” Daniel confessed his sin, personal sin, and Daniel confessed national sin.

Now if you read the story of Daniel in the Bible, you’ll not find one sin ever marked up against Daniel there. But because God didn’t mark it up, it’s not recorded in the Bible, doesn’t mean that Daniel never sinned. The Bible says in First John 1 verses 8 and 9, “*If we say no, we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*” So there’s not a mother’s child in this building that doesn’t need to pray and confess his or her sin, as we sin, or while we sin. But thank God, “*If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” Not some. There is no sin, none, none, none! That is beyond God’s forgiveness. Rape. Murder. Pillage. Abortion. Sodomy. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And Daniel prayed for forgiveness for personal sin. But now listen carefully: he also prayed for the forgiveness of national sin. Now these were not sins that Daniel had committed per se, but this is what I call “identification prayer.” He identified himself with a nation and he said, “Oh God, my nation has sinned. God have mercy.” You can identify with this nation and pray for this nation. Because the sinful, wicked people of this nation are not going to pray for themselves.

What kind of a confession should we make concerning America? First of all, **we need to confess our greed**, our greed. We are a materialistic nation. We know more about Wall Street and Madison Avenue than we know about the prophet Daniel.

And then we need to pray and ask God to forgive us for **the neglect of the poor**. We have bread enough and to spare, and we’re spending money on all kinds of things, and have forgotten the poor and the needy. May God have mercy upon us!

We need to ask God to forgive us as a nation for **our racism**. For thinking because of the color of our skin that we’re better than any other of God’s children. Racism has divided our country.

We need to repent of the **sexual immorality** of this nation. If Hollywood wants you to go see a film, they advertise it as sexy, as immoral, as “triple X,” and then the people flock in to feed on garbage. Our modern movie stars have faces like angels and morals like alley cats. But the people today, sit in their home, get their entertainment by watching sexual immorality.

America needs to repent of the merciless **killing of the unborn**. We need to repent of that. Say, “God have mercy upon us.”

We need to repent of the Godless **humanism that has invaded and pervaded our schools**. Yes, personal confession, do yours. There’s no time for finger-pointing; it’s time for repentance. And national confession. Identify yourself with this nation. Understand that we are a God-ordained nation. No nation ever had such a Christian beginning as America, but now we’re turning from our faith and our freedoms that are quickly receding over the horizon.

Number four, number four: We are **to pray**, brothers and sisters, **with spiritual concern**, with spiritual concern. What were Da, Daniel’s concerns when he prayed? Number one, the removing of guilt and number two, the restoration of glory. It’s very simple, he wanted **the guilt removed**. Look if you will in Daniel 9 and verse 16, “O Lord, according to all Thy righteousness, I beseech Thee, let Thine anger and Thy fury be turned away from Thy city Jerusalem, Thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.” Did you know that America is becoming one of the most hated nations on the face of the earth? Why is that? Because we have so much and have done so little with it. They look at America, and what they know about America is our movies that we present overseas. What they know about America is our military might. What they know about America is our materialism, and they call us “The Great Satan.” Now what we need to pray is “God, cleanse us, restore us, revive us, renew us, refresh us. We need revival in America. Remove our guilt.”

But there’s another thing that he prayed for. Listen, he was concerned not only about the removal of guilt, but **the restoration of glory**. Look in Daniel 9 verse 17, “Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Thy servant, and his supplications,” now watch, “and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate,” now underscore this phrase, “for the Lord’s sake.” And then Daniel 9 verse 19, “O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not,” now listen, “for Thine own sake, Oh my God, for Thy city and the people that are called by Thy name.”

Do you pray for the glory of God? Do you know what most of us want? We want to have revival so we can return to our own ways, so we can go back again one more time, once God gets us out of the difficulty we’re in. Do you have a burning, yearning in your heart for the glory of God? I do. I want to see God’s glory spread over this land. I want to see God do something again that cannot be explained by the pundits on television and the news anchors. I want something that cannot be explained by technology, personality, propaganda or persuasion. I want the glory of God; the removal of guilt, and the glory of God. That ought to be the concern of our prayers for America. That, ladies and gentlemen, is revival. Not for Bellevue’s sake, not for our denomination’s sake, not for America’s sake, but for the glory of God.

Now let me tell you something. It is prayer time in America. Would you agree? It is prayer time in America. And this church needs to be a church of prayer and fasting.

Now, again, I want to ask you, are you on praying ground? James 5:16 says, “*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*” Thank God for that.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. And if you don’t have a heart inclined to prayer, would you ask God to give you one? Would you ask God to work on your own heart? You’ve been caught up with the toys and the trivialities of this world, the pride and the pleasure, would you ask God, “Oh God speak to my heart. Don’t let me wonder about what God is saying to someone else, but speak, oh God, to my heart this morning. Oh God, send revival; let it begin in me. Then Lord, let it move into my family and into my class, into this dear church, into this city and into this world.”

Now while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you’re a patriot, the most patriotic thing you can do is not say “my country right or wrong,” but it is to give your heart to Jesus Christ, to get saved, to have your sin forgiven. But there’s a deeper reason than patriotism for doing that. There is a death to die. There is a judgment to face. Soon and very soon you will stand face to face with Almighty God. You do not want to rise in the resurrection and face a God in the judgment that you do not know with sin unforgiven. You need to be saved.

Now while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I want to explain to you one more time that salvation is on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. He is God’s Son. He stepped out of Heaven. He suffered, bled and died in your place, and with His blood He paid the full price for your sin. And therefore God is willing and able to forgive your sin on the basis of what Jesus Christ did on the cross. But that has no application to you, it only increases your judgment if you neglect it, refuse it, or reject it. Would you like to be saved? Would you? I mean really saved. I’m not just talking about joining a church or getting religion. Would like to be saved, twice born? Would you? The Bible says, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.*” May I guide you in a prayer? Make this your prayer if you can. “Dear God, I know that You love me. I know that You had rather forgive me than judge me. You’re a God of mercy and a God of forgiveness. Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to die for me on that cross. Jesus, thank You for Your shed blood for me. And now Lord Jesus, this morning, right where I am, in this seat, right now, I open my heart. I receive You into my life as my Lord and Savior, and I give my life back to You to serve You in any way that You call upon me. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Jesus.”

Did you pray that prayer? Then pray this prayer, “Thank You for doing it. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. And help me, Lord Jesus, never, never to be ashamed of You. Give me the courage to make this public. In Your name I pray, Amen.”