

Dependable God

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[0 : 0 0] for the privilege of coming, and I'm glad Matthew was able to get some time off. And John, he did ask if I'd continue his series in Daniel, and so I picked up Daniel chapter 9, but I didn't want to make his job too easy. He only took the first half, and if you look at the second half, you'll understand why I left that for him. It's maybe one of the most challenging, well, not maybe, it is one of the most challenging passages in all the Bible. So you're going to want to come back next week to see how Matthew deals with that one. In fact, I'm curious myself. So it's quite a passage. But we are looking at the theme of prayer this morning. But five-year-old Ashlyn Blocker is a fearless little girl. She runs and plays, and when she falls down, she does not cry. She just gets right back up. If she's drinking hot soup, she gulps it down without flinching. She's fearless because she feels no pain. It's not that she doesn't feel anything. She does feel. She can feel the difference between the coins as she sorts them on her bedroom floor. She can feel the softness of her teddy bear and the hug and embrace of her mom. But because of a genetic disorder, she doesn't feel any pain. She can't feel pain. She doesn't feel extreme changes in temperature or hot and cold. And, you know, you know, you would think that would be a gift. I mean, wouldn't you like to have a pain-free life? Jim was just praying about that, right? Wouldn't it be great? No aches and pains. But it's actually quite a curse. As her mother observes, pain's there for a reason. It lets your body know something's wrong and needs to be fixed. Her mother says, I would give anything, anything for my daughter to be able to feel pain. Most of the time, we feel like our life is under control because most of the time, it's not all that painful. We can handle it. We can figure it out. In fact, you get up in the morning and you start thinking about what you're going to do that day. And you don't think about needing help or crying out. You just think about what you're going to do that day. You make your plans for this week, next week, and so on. And you assume you can handle it because you always have. But then things happen.

You lose your job. Your marriage gets a bit rocky. You have a child that seems incorrigible. A global pandemic comes. And you suddenly realize you're not in control. The life is far more than you can handle. And that pain comes into our life. And it's like the glowing on your dashboard when your gas tank is empty saying, you need to pay attention to this. Sometimes it's that fire alarm that goes off in the middle of the night and just startles you and brings you wide awake and realize, I've got a problem. I need help. And that is what happens to us in pain. The question is, when you're awakened by your pain, when suffering comes in, what do you do next?

We see this in Daniel, the chapter we're looking at, Daniel chapter 9. The people of God, the Jews, thought that they could handle life on their own, that they really didn't need God. And so they basically put God out of their life and followed other gods. But then in 605 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians came rolling into town, conquered the people of Judah, took off people into captivity, one of those being Daniel, as well as his friends Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego.

He took them off into captivity. Nineteen years later, they come back and they destroy the city of Jerusalem, leveling the temple where essentially nothing is left, completely devastate the place, leave it in ruins.

And as we turn to Daniel chapter 9, it's been at least 60 years since the Babylonians came in, which means then if Daniel was, you know, maybe a teenager or 20, he's an older man by now. He has gotten quite a bit older.

[3 : 5 4] And the Babylonian empire has been replaced by the Persians. But for the Jews who are living in Babylon, nothing really has changed. One empire, another empire, it doesn't matter. They're subjected to them.

Their homeland is still in ruins, and they're powerless to do anything about it. The so-called people of God seem destined to become a footnote in history. What do you do when your world falls apart, when your life is full of pain, and you can't handle it? Well, Daniel shows us here in chapter 9. Let's look at this passage again. We're going to read verses 1 through 19. This is God's Word. In the first year of Darius, the son of Hazarias by Desenamede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet must pass before the end of the desolation of Jerusalem, namely 70 years. Then I turned my face to the Lord, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession, saying, O Lord, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keeps his commandments. We have sinned and have done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. 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.

To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame. As at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far off, and all the lands to which you have driven them because of the treachery that they have committed against you. To us, O Lord, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. To the Lord, our God, belongs mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord, our God, by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servant, the prophets. All Israel has transgressed your laws, and turned aside, and refused to obey your voice. And the curse and the oaths that are written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against them.

He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us, and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heavens, there's not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us, yet we have not entreated the favor of the Lord, our God, turning from our iniquities, and gaining insight by your truth. Therefore, the Lord has kept ready the calamity he has brought upon us. For the Lord, our God, is righteous in all the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice. And now, O Lord, our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and who have made a name for yourself, as at this day we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

[7 : 06] O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city, Jerusalem, your holy hill, because of our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem, and your people have become a byword among all who are around us. Now, therefore, O our God, listen to the prayers of your servants and his pleas for mercy. And for your sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline your ear and hear, open your eyes and see our desolation and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, hear.

O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name. This is God's holy word. Let's pray. O Lord, as we turn our attention to your word and we hear this prayer of confession and this plea, O Lord, we pray that it become our prayer as well in the specific situations in which we find ourselves today. So I pray, help us to understand your word, that we can apply it to our lives, that we can live out the pattern that we see here, that we can seek the mercy and grace from you. So, Lord, speak to us. We pray that you would send your spirit, open our ears. Your word is clear. Our minds at times are foggy. So we pray, O Lord, clear our heads to hear your word, that we might receive it today. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. One of the things we see in this passage and that we see in our own lives, as we mentioned earlier, is that we are motivated to pray when we see our need. That's what drives us to prayer. In fact, I think that's characteristic of most of us. When life is going well, you might forget to pray. But I tell you what, if your kids are struggling, there's not a parent who struggles with prayer.

If you get a diagnosis that you have cancer, you don't struggle to pray. When we see our need, we're aware of our need, that is when we pray. Now, the issue is, though, we're always needy.

[9 : 21] We just don't know it. We're always needy. We just don't know it. Now, Daniel knows it. He's an old man. He spent most of his life in exile away from his homeland. Yet, despite all the hardships, despite all that he's gone through, he has not become bitter with God. He's not become disenchanted with his faith. Instead, he continues to read God's word regularly, and he continues to pray.

And so, one day, he's reading in the prophet Jeremiah. Now, Jeremiah is called the weeping prophet. The reason he's called the weeping prophet is because he weeps over the people of God. They have been so rebellious against God that God is now bringing upon them these various curses.

And so, Daniel is reading through Jeremiah, but he comes to chapter 25. And in chapter 25, God says that the exile will last 70 years. And Daniel does the math. He says, I've been here for at least 60. And so, he realizes the exile must be coming to an end. And so, it's starting to a close.

And so, he prays. But notice the nature of his prayer. He doesn't simply pray and say, thank God it's almost over, even though he believes the word of God. What he recognizes, though, is that God uses the prayers of his people to accomplish his purposes. And that, therefore, he prays because without the prayers of God's people, God will not do what he said he will do. But God is going to do what he said he's going to do. He's just going to use the prayers of his people to accomplish his purposes. That's how God works in this great, great mystery of divine power. In fact, we see it in verse 20 and following where Daniel's prayer results in the angel Gabriel coming. And Matthew's going to explain all of that next week. So, I'll leave that for him.

And so, prayer accomplishes God's purpose. But notice the prayer. The prayer is not one of celebration, but one of repentance, a prayer of confession. The prayer goes from verse 4 to verse 19. And the first 15 verses, essentially, are nothing but confession and repentance. He really doesn't get to any petitions, any requests, until verse 15. He doesn't ask God for anything. And in these verses, Daniel doesn't just confess his own sin. He confesses the sin of the people. You're part of a body. Now, many of these sins that Daniel confesses, he had no part of. But he sees and recognizes he's part of God's covenant people. And so, he is along with them, enduring the curses. He is part of them. And so, he prays this prayer of corporate confession for the people of God. And so, we see that in this prayer that the people of God have done many detestable things. And we find more of these in Jeremiah that Daniel is reading. They have ranged from immorality, neglect of the poor.

[12 : 06] You know, but fundamental among all these sins, that the root of all of them is that they have neglected God. They have broken covenant with God. See, God entered into a covenant with his people.

And the covenant was this, I will be your God, and you will be my people. And it's like a marriage covenant, a husband and a wife. I'll be your husband, you'll be my wife. I'll be your God, you'll be my people. Till death do us part, let's be faithful to one another as long as we both shall live. And God kept the covenant. The Israelites did not. They committed spiritual adultery. They cheated on God with other idols. They were adulterous to him. And as a result, since they were rejecting God, God removes his protection from them and then sends the Babylonians who take him away. Now, God did not send the Jews into exile as a fit of anger. He's not throwing this divine temper tantrum because his feelings are hurt. Rather, he gives them what they want. They say, we want life without you. We don't want you. We want to serve these other gods. And God says, okay, how's that working for you? How's that working for you? And in Jeremiah 2.13, the book that Daniel is reading here,

God sums up his charges against his people. He says, For my people have committed two great evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Now, a cistern was sort of like a man-made hole in the ground, big cavern in the ground that was used to collect water. And you can imagine why this is so important in the Middle East, in the dry land, because without water, you're going to die. And so, it was the cisterns were the source of life during these times of drought. And what God is saying about the Israelites, the Jews, is they have, instead of coming to him, the fountain of living water, they have forsaken the life-giving God and tried to create life on their own, but they created broken cisterns, which simply are going to lead to death. They're trying to live independently of him. We oftentimes have a very limited definition of sin. We think of sin as breaking a rule, not keeping a commandment. And certainly, those things are

true. Daniel confesses those sins here in Daniel chapter 9. But behind all of those sins, what leads us to breaking God's commandment is saying, I want to go my own way. I'm going to trust myself. I'm going to trust something else to provide for me rather than you. We're hewing out our own cisterns. Or as Martin Luther said, he said this about the Ten Commandments, he said, you never break the last nine without first breaking the first one. The first commandment is, you shall have no other gods before me. All the other nine actually are results of breaking that first commandment, of not trusting in God to be a provider, trusting in him enough to obey.

So sin is when we forsake God, when we fail to depend on him, and instead dig our own cisterns. You know, we are made to live in communion with God. It is how you are built. You are not designed to live independently. Our desire for independence is actually going against our nature. The fact that you are needful of God is not a bug in your programming, it's a feature. It is how we are designed. And so whenever we attempt to live apart from God, we are acting out of accord with our design.

[15:55] Just as everything that has life on earth depends on the Son, the way they're designed, the way they're created, we were made to live in communion with God. And because God is a loving Father, when he sees us going away from the waters of life and moving away from him, he is a loving Father who will bring those painful things into our lives when necessary to show us that we are dependent on him.

Alcides put this quite famously. He said, you know, God whispers to us in our pleasure, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain. It's his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.

God awakens us. We cannot make it on our own. We're like little children, you know, like the, you'll see the little boy, he wants to cross the busy intersection by himself. And a mom, if she loves her child, and assumes she does, she's not going to let the little boy say, hope you make it, you know. She's going to grab him by the hand, sometimes forcefully, sometimes with discipline, maybe even stern discipline, not because she hates her son, but because she loves her son. She knows what he needs. You know, David Brooks said something quite similarly when he observed that suffering produces things in our lives that prosperity cannot. You know, if you ask somebody, what were the events that shaped you, that made you the kind of, you know, good person that you are, no one says, well, you know, I was really a mean, selfish jerk, and then I went on this amazing vacation to Hawaii, and wow, just changed my life. You know, it's not what they say. They talk about the hardship, the suffering that they've endured, the difficulties. And it's in our moments of difficulty and struggle when our illusion of control is shattered that God shows us that we need him. He directs our attention to himself.

And again, he doesn't do this because he wants to humiliate us. He's not doing this to bring shame on us. He exposes the shame of our independence because he loves us so that we will turn to him. In this way, pain is a severe mercy. It's an act of kindness to redirect us off of the path of destruction. And so, the first thing we see in Daniel's prayer is that the pain and suffering that they're going through and the pain and suffering we have in our lives is to show us our own neediness.

[18:25] Now, if that's all we see, if that's all we see, that's quite depressing. If you see life as being out of control and you can't handle it, but you don't see any hope, then you're going to be depressed.

But that's not all we see in this prayer. We also see God's incredible mercy, God's mercy. You know, there are times when I struggle to pray, frankly, because I don't think I need to. You know, I mean, again, all the time, you get up in the morning and think, God, I've got this, right? There are other times when I struggle to pray because I think, well, why would he listen to me? You ever think that way? You know, you're thinking, well, you know, like the Israelites here, they abandoned God. They forsook God. They said they didn't want God.

And all of a sudden now they're having trouble. They're going to cry out to God. I mean, what right do they have? Have you ever felt that way? You know, thinking, well, you know, I messed things up. It's my fault. And so, how can I call out to God now? Can I really cry out to him after ignoring him so long? Well, Daniel shows us that we can, and he does so by first appealing to God's character. And the specific aspect of his character is his righteousness. Another way to think of God's righteousness is God always does what is right. He always does the right thing. And so, Daniel appeals to this aspect of God where God always does the right thing. Look at verse 7.

He says, To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame. See, in their marriage relationship, which this covenant relationship between God and his people, God has always done the right thing.

[20 : 07] He has been a faithful covenant God. He's always been there. He's done what is right. The Israelites, on the other hand, have been adulterous. And now their adultery has been exposed for everyone to see.

Their exile is like a scarlet letter that tells everyone who they are. And their exile shows their shame because of their sin and what they have done. And so, they've been humiliated by this.

They're exposed. You ever had that feeling? You're human. You have. We all know about shame. We all know about shame. Shame from things that have been done to us, but even more shame of things that we have done. And we feel exposed. You know, when I was a freshman in college, I rarely went to class. That is not an exaggeration. It was so bad that such a delinquent student that at the end of my freshman year, I was suspended from Georgia Tech. And so, that meant I couldn't go back. So, I transferred.

It took me only one semester to get suspended for my next college. And I will never forget coming home and having to face my mom and my dad and my sister and my friends and my church and everyone else saying, so, what's going on? You don't want to say what's going on when your life is falling apart because you messed it up. I mean, I had no one, no one to blame but me. And it's that open shame because of my own sin, my own failures. And Daniel says that's how it was for the Jews, that their open shame and their shame was for everyone to see. They're completely exposed. And because they had acted shamefully, Daniel then says in verse 14 that God was righteous. That is, that God did the right thing by sending them into exile. God's anger against Israel was not malicious or capricious. It was precisely what righteousness demanded. It was righteous for God to send them into exile. And so, then the question is, if it was the right thing for God to do to send them into exile, if God's not doing the wrong thing, then what right does Daniel have to ask him to take them out of exile? I mean, if it's right that they are punished and they're just getting what they deserve, what right does Daniel have to go against that? This is what righteousness demands.

[22 : 40] Well, notice that Daniel does not appeal to God's mercy instead of his righteousness. He does not pit God's mercy. He does not pit. He does not pit. He does not pit. He does not pit. He does not pit.

As if the two things contradict. Rather, he appeals to God's mercy on the basis of God's righteousness. Verse 16, O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city, Jerusalem, and your holy hill. He's saying, God, the right thing for you to do is to turn away your anger from us and your judgment for us. Now, how could that be? He just said it was the right thing for him to do to have his anger towards him. But notice what he's doing. He's pleading with God on the basis of their covenant relationship. He's pleading with them on the basis of the relationship they have. Yes, Israel has acted shamefully. Israel has committed adultery. Yet, because they're God's people, says, God, you can't abandon us. We're yours.

You pledged yourself to us. We're still your people. We're the people that you made a name for yourself by rescuing us out of Egypt. The whole world knows we belong to you. They know who we're married to. They know who is you. And so, he appeals to them. He appeals to God on this basis.

Look at verse 16. He says, he refers to Jerusalem as your city, your hill. Then he says that your people are an object of scorn. Verse 17, he asks God to restore the sanctuary for your sake. Verse 18, he reminds God that Jerusalem, which is now lying in ruins, is called by your name. And then in verse 19, he sums it all up with these words. Delay not for your own sake. Oh, my God, because of your city and your people are called by your name. Notice the word that's repeated over and over again. Your, your, your God. This is about you. This is about who you are. Daniel says, even though we've broken covenant with you, you cannot break covenant with us. It would not be right. Because God is righteous, he must remain faithful to his covenant, even when his people are unfaithful to him. Notice then that the covenant that God has with his people is a one-way covenant.

[25 : 01] It's a gracious covenant. It's not conditioned on us. It's conditioned on him. Paul says the same thing in his second letter to Timothy. He says, if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself. If we are faithless, he remains faithful because he cannot deny himself. God is a covenant-keeping God. We do not appeal to him based on our character, but based on his. We do not appeal to him because we have kept the covenant, but because of his faithfulness to the

covenant. We do not appeal to him on the basis of our righteousness, but on the basis of his righteousness. Now, think of how different that is sometimes how we pray.

We come before God and say, Lord, I've made a mess of things. I've broken things, and it's all in ruins. And, Lord, if you'll only bail me out this one time, I promise I will do better. I'll make a bargain with you. And so, what are you asking? You're praying not in Jesus' name. You're not asking God to bless you because of what Jesus has done for you. You're actually praying in your own name. You're saying, Lord, look at what I have done in one case or in another case. Lord, look at what I'll do. I'll pay you back. I'll earn it.

I'll be a good son. Thomas Boston, I forgot what century, Scottish preacher, famous Scottish preacher said this, when a man begins to pray like this, even if he reforms his character, even if he changes how he lives completely, if he gets to the end of his life and he's been thinking that he's going to stand before God because he has done the right thing, he will be completely and utterly lost. The only thing, the only thing that we have that gives us any standing before God is the righteousness of God, not our righteousness. It is not our faithfulness. It is his faithfulness. If we are faithless, he remains faithful for he cannot deny himself. So, we don't cry to God because we're asking him for what we deserve. That would be a horrible prayer. We cry out to him based on who he is. And as Daniel says in verse 18, for we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. Our prayers to God from first to last are never, ever based on us or our works, but solely based on him. That still leads us with the question. If God's righteousness demands that sin is punished, that we receive judgment, and it does. Remember, the Bible says, for the soul that sins shall surely die, the wages of sin is death. So, the right punishment for our sin is death, is judgment. And yet, on the other hand, the righteous thing for God to do, because he's the one who made the covenant, and it's a unilateral covenant, a one-way covenant, is for God to remain faithful to his people, it seems like we have a contradiction in the righteousness of God. God, to be right, has to punish us. God, to be right, has to be faithful to us. How do we reconcile these two things? Well, we see that reconciliation coming out in the covenant that he's made with his son. We see it on the cross. On the cross, Jesus suffered the demands of the righteous judgment. He took on the full justice of God for his people. He made full payment for the sins of his people. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians, for our sake, he made him, that is Jesus, to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. See, when a person becomes a Christian, then, let's go back to this covenant relationship. You become married to Jesus. The two become one.

And when you get married, you know, I've got a daughter getting married next weekend. You get married. If one person has debt and the other person has money, guess what? The person who has money now has debt, and the person who had debt now has money. That's just how it works, right? And we're coming into this covenant relationship, and we've got a lot of debt. We've got the debt for our sins, all of it. Jesus has his full righteousness. And so, when we come and are united to Christ, in the number one way the New Testament describes Christians as in Christ, in him, in Jesus. That means you are united to him, which means everything that is his is now yours, and everything that is yours is now his. So, when Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he paid full penalty, not in just some sort of legal, fictitious sort of way, but in reality, because we are now one. And so, that we can say that God's judgment against our sin has been fully satisfied because we are so united to Christ that we have died with him, and we live with him, and we even now are seated with him, as Paul says, in the heavenly realm. And so, because we are united to Christ, our sin has been paid for. Our judgment is gone, and we have the righteous work of Christ that has now been credited to us so that now, when the Father looks at you, he's not looking at you based on your performance. He's looking at you based on the work of Jesus Christ, which is now yours by faith and by faith alone. And again, to use the bride analogy. You ever been to, I've been to a few weddings, and I get to stand right there, we know, with the groom, and I get to see the bride at the back of the church. There's no such thing as an ugly bride. It just doesn't happen. And when God looks at us, the bride of Christ, the church, he stands there seeing us robed in the righteousness of Christ, he says, wow, wow, stunning. That's how the Father looks at you, not based on your works, based on the righteousness of Christ, the blood of Christ that's been shed for us, the life of Christ that's been given to us. And it tells us something more.

[31 : 21] That means that Jesus loved us enough to take the judgment of God for us in order to keep his covenant with us. And if Jesus died to keep his covenant with us, then we know he loves

us dearly. If God would not, as Paul says, along with him, he gave his son up for us all, how will he not along with him graciously give us all things? So now when you go to pray, and you're praying, and you go, I can't believe God wants to listen to me, and you think, wait a second, he gave his son for me. Jesus died for me. He kept his covenant for me. If he's done all those things for me, then I know that he loves me, and I know now I can pour out my heart to God. Now, here's the amazing thing. The more you believe that God loves you, the more you're going to want to live a life that pleases him. You know, you'll always do more for the one who loves you than anyone else. And so, when we understand that, it actually changes how we live, but we still come to God always on the basis of Christ. And we say, if he loves me enough to die for me, then I can trust him enough to obey, and I can trust him enough to cry out to him in my pain. A 12-year-old boy from Florida was vacationing with his family in the North Carolina mountains. They're sliding down the rocks, and they have these waterfalls. They're just beautiful.

But as he's sliding down the rocks, his foot got stuck in a boulder. And the water's now coming down, and the boy's going underwater. The father sees his son in distress, and he goes over, and he tries to lift the boy up, but the foot won't come loose. And so, all the father can do is hold his son up above the water that's rushing and pounding against him, pounding against him, pounding against him. And so, he's holding his son so the rescue can come, and it takes 30 minutes, which in some ways is remarkably fast, right? But 30 minutes, he's holding his son up, trying to keep his son alive.

And you can imagine him saying, I got you, son. I've got you, son. I'm not going to let you go. And so, finally, the rescue team comes, and they get the son free. And as they get the son free, the father's foot gets stuck, and he can't get free. And even as they're removing the son away, the father goes under the waves, is beaten down, hypothermia exhausted, and he never comes back up.

He loses his life rescuing his son. In the same way, we see Jesus has done that for us. He jumped into the stream when we were overwhelmed by our sin. He lifted us to safety at the price of his own life. And with his dying breath, he proved his love for us. That's why we pray.

Christian, he loves you. If you're in Christ, he loves you. And we pray because we know that he cares. There's never a question. Never let your sin and your failure keep you from God. Let it be the thing that drives you to God. Never let your sense of you have things over control keep you from God, because that's an illusion. You're not in control. Let it drive you to God. See your need. And the more you believe that he is faithful to you, the more you will long to be faithful to him.

[34 : 36] And just as you cry out to God for your own need, cry out to God for the sake of others as well. Notice that Daniel is not praying only for himself. He's praying. He's praying for the people, for all of God's people. He's praying for others. He's praying even in areas where he has not sinned himself. He's praying for God's restoration. Daniel will never experience the restoration that he's praying about. He'll never go back to Jerusalem. And so, he's passionately praying for others because he's experienced God's grace in his own life that he longs for other people to experience God's grace in their lives. God has called us to do the same thing. A couple of weeks ago, I was on a call with a missionary in Cambodia. I don't know much about Cambodia. I was learning from him. And Cambodia is a spiritually dark place, spiritually dark place. It is known primarily for its drug and sex trafficking, human trafficking, children trafficking, exploiting them. Cambodia is less than 2% evangelical Christians.

You know, don't the people of Cambodia deserve to hear God's grace as much as we do? Well, let me put it another way. Do we actually deserve God's grace more than they do? Of course not. Otherwise, it wouldn't be grace. You know, later that same week, I was talking to a group of people in India, a hundred of us on a Zoom call, and we're hearing from various pastors about around the continent there, the subcontinent, about what's going on. You've seen it. People are dying so quickly from the pandemic, they're just floating them down the river. They're burning them in open fields. It is overwhelming. The government is cracked down on their churches, and yet still missionaries are able to get in, but it's still, it's a very difficult thing. And so, the people are facing death. Everybody on that call from India has lost friends during this pandemic to death. But every day, every day, millions of people die without Christ, facing an even greater judgment. And so, they're dying without hope, without ever hearing the good news, without hearing about God's love and mercy. Do we deserve God's grace more than the people of India?

The grace that God has given us is not for ourselves, but it's for the world. And those who get grace deeply share grace generously. And those who understand grace will never be merely concerned about themselves.

It is not just for us. It is for the sake of the world. And so, may we be like Daniel, not just praying about our own needs, our own brokenness, but praying for the world as well. Let me lead us in prayer.

Father, we do thank you that you're a God who is rich in mercy, gracious, kind, that you're a God who is always faithful to your covenant. But Lord, we confess, even as we did earlier this morning during our time of confession, we confess, O Lord, that we are a faithless people. Lord, forgive us. Forgive us not because we're going to do better or try harder. Lord, we do plan to try harder, but we don't ask you to forgive us based on that. We ask you to forgive us based on what Jesus has done for us in that alone. And so, Lord, we pray that the grace that you show us would so grip our hearts that it would change the way that we live. We pray that your grace would so grip our hearts that we would cry out to you, not only in those times of pain, but even in those times when things don't seem painful, that we would live in constant communion with you. We pray that prayer would just be our natural way of living as we breathe. And Lord, we pray not only for ourselves, but we pray for our world.

[38 : 15] We pray for a world that is broken, a world that is needy. We pray for the people, you know, just so many around our world right now have no knowledge of your grace, of your mercy, of your kindness.

O Lord, we pray. We pray, O Lord, may they come to know. May we be willing to go and to share. O Lord, we lift them up before you. For your name's sake, O Lord, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.