

DANIEL — WEEK 11

FOR HIS SAKE



F. Michael Slay
A DEEP Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The cover image is Daniel in the Lions' Den by Peter Paul Rubens

This section begins with a call to embarrassment. Their faces should be burning. God has been “unglorified” by their sin. Daniel calls for God’s face to shine, “for the Lord’s sake.” And don’t delay.

So, Gabriel “flies in” immediately. Great punishment is still decreed, but only for a time.

We’re pleased to provide *the DEEP* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity in the Lord.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. To subscribe to the daily DEEP email, visit our website at www.ailbe.org and click the sign-up button at the bottom.

There, you will also discover many other resources, including many email newsletters, such as our worldview study *ReVision*, our devotional newsletter *Crosfigell*, and *the DEEP*.

We are a spiritual fellowship patterned after the Celtic Revival. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

T. M. Moore, Principal
tmmoore@ailbe.org

Thank you.

All the individual weekly study guides are available for download here:

<https://www.ailbe.org/resources/itemlist/category/91-deep-studies>

Daniel, Week 11 — For His Sake
Copyright 2021 F. Michael Slay
The Fellowship of Ailbe
www.ailbe.org

Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. ESV stands for the English Standard Version. © Copyright 2001 by Crossway. Used by permission. All rights reserved. NIV stands for The Holy Bible, New International Version®. © Copyright 1973 by International Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved. KJV stands for the King James Version.

1 Daniel 9:7–12

“O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against You.

“O Lord, to us belongs shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him. We have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets. Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him. And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing upon us a great disaster; for under the whole heaven such has never been done as what has been done to Jerusalem.”

“Shame of face,” is the literal translation of “bo-set ha-pah-neem.” The ESV translates it as, “open shame.” The NIV says, “covered with shame.” These paraphrases obscure the point.

This refers to shame you can feel, shame that makes you blush, shame that makes your face hurt.

This is critical to understanding the passage because shame of face is a good thing. You have to be capable of embarrassment to be embarrassed. Your face only burns when you know you’ve done wrong. In other words, shame of face is repentance people can see. That’s a glorious, wonderful thing.

Unfortunately, Daniel isn’t saying that his people have achieved that level of repentance. He says that it *belongs* to them. *“O Lord, to us belongs shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against You.”*

It’s a call to repentance—literally a call to embarrassment.

This is exactly what we need. Our nation is in desperate need of revival and that revival starts with recognizing our need for revival.

But this is more than just recognizing that our nation needs a revival. We (the church) need revival. Revival starts with the church getting back to practicing the kingship of Jesus. After a year-long quarantine, everyone wants to get out and get back to normal—or at least get back to work.

But we weren’t that hard at the work of our Lord before. We need to regret the opportunities missed and get on with the work of the kingdom.

But there’s more. It’s more than recognizing that the church needs revival. I need revival. I need to repent of my apathy and sloth.

My face is burning.

2 Daniel 9:13–15

“As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth. Therefore the LORD has kept the disaster in mind, and brought it upon us; for the LORD our God is righteous in all the works which He does, though 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 made Yourself a name, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have done wickedly!”

There’s an interesting difficulty in translating this passage. Many translations differ with the NKJV on the cause-and-effect relationship in the first verse. For example, the NIV translates verse 13 as, *“Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come on us, yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth.”*

So, have they not sought God’s favor by turning from sin, or have they not prayed for His favor so that they might turn from sin? Which is it?

It’s both. Both translations are valid. Remember, a passage has to be clear to the people in whose mother tongue it was written. It can’t be ambiguous in the original text, even if it’s hard to say it in English.

So, when you encounter a passage with multiple possible translations, the trick to understanding it is to try to merge the various alternatives. Find the common ground.

For this passage, the common ground is the idea that praying for God’s favor and turning from sin go hand-in-hand. Neither one comes first. It’s not that you pray first and turning from sin comes second, nor do you turn from sin first and that leads to prayer later.

This makes perfect sense because praying isn’t a one-time event, and neither is turning from sin. Both are baby steps taken over and over again.

Prayer and turning from sin grow together.

The takeaway here is that if you want to turn from sin, pray about it. If you want to improve your prayer life, turn from sin. Most importantly, if you’re thinking, “I don’t need to turn from sin,” pray about that. We know that we’re all sinners, but we can fall into the trap of thinking that our case isn’t so severe that we need a change that would qualify as “turning.” We just need to grow, not reverse course, right?

No, and this is where a serious accountability partner is indispensable. Ask that trusted person what needs more than a minor course correction in your life.

And don’t expect, nor demand, a quick answer. You might hear at first, “I can’t think of one.” Encourage him or her to come up with something.

Do **not** hope that they can’t.

3 Daniel 9:16–18

“O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all those around us. Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord’s sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies.”

This is beautiful. Daniel pours out his heart, asking that *Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain*, would be restored to its former glory. And Daniel wants this, not for himself, but *for the Lord’s sake*, because *Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all those around us*. It’s all about God’s glory.

I try to pray in this style, but it feels so presumptuous. “Lord, for Your own glory, heal my friend.”

It is presumptuous. That’s why Christ commanded us to pray for these things.

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.
— John 15:7

Without the Lord’s commanding us to ask for what we desire, those prayers would be pure chutzpah. Instead, they’re pure obedience. Still, this passage highlights how we should be mindful of God’s glory in our prayers. That should affect more than just our style; it should affect what we pray for. What does, “*abide in Me*” mean, anyway?

Well, “*and My words abide in you,*” definitely refers to knowledge of the Bible. Abiding in Christ, combined with knowing scripture, surely means having scripture’s perspective, particularly about what’s important. What’s important is God’s glory, as embodied in the commands—love God and love thy neighbor.

So, abiding in Christ definitely includes prioritizing His glory. Our prayers should reflect that.

If glorifying God is of greatest importance, how should we pray?

Of course, our requests for things like healing and guidance should be couched in terms of His glory, but should there be some glory-specific subjects? Praying for revival is one that we’ve already mentioned. Are there others?

Daniel’s prayer provides a model. He specifically mentions something specific that “unglorifies” God, namely, “*Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all those around us.*” So, one way to pray for God’s glory is to ask God to help us remove the stains in ourselves and our society that embarrass Him.

The current state of Christianity in America gives us plenty of material to work with.

4 Daniel 9:19–23 (ESV)

“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.

“While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the LORD my God for the holy hill of my God, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, “O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding. At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved. Therefore consider the word and understand the vision.”

This confirms that Daniel’s prayer was proper. It is answered big time.

Right in the middle, *while I was speaking in prayer*, Gabriel shows up. And the passage makes a point of saying that it’s rapid-response. *Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight.*

So, it’s worth noting what Daniel does right in his prayer. We’ve already done some of that when we noted his honesty and repentance in Daniel 9:1–6.

He’s also focusing on God’s glory. Here Daniel begins with, *“While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the LORD my God for the holy hill of my God.”* He’s not praying for himself or his friends, but *for the holy hill of my God.*

Lastly, he asks for a prompt response, *“because your city and your people are called by your name.”*

I said in an earlier devotional that from a secular point of view, Daniel was acting like the world’s worst lawyer. This shows that from a kingdom point of view, he’s acting like a great lawyer. Within the mindset that everything is about God’s glory, he makes a brilliant case. He “argues” the point conclusively.

We need to pray like that. We should think more about what we’re going to pray for before we pray.

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” — Benjamin Franklin

As long as we’re thinking about what to pray for, how about thinking ahead? It seems like all our prayers are for fixing things after they’ve already gone bad. How about praying to guard against error?

And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” — Luke 12:15

O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. — 1 Timothy 6:20–21

5 Daniel 9:24–27 (ESV)

“Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”

The text doesn’t actually say “weeks.” It says “sevens” (shev-a-eem). There is wide agreement that each week represents seven years. Seventy sevens is 490 years. This is broken into sixty-two weeks (434 years), seven weeks (49 years), and one week (7 years).

However, there is great disagreement about when this played out (or will play out), but the events that occurred in the half-millennium after Daniel wrote this passage do fit this prophesy quite well. Terrible things were done. *Desolations [were] decreed*. The temple was desecrated horribly. This nightmare continued *until the decreed end [was] poured out on the desolator*.

But the details of the punishment on God’s people aren’t as important as its structure. God’s justice and His unique sense of timing are on display. Some of this isn’t easy to accept.

For starters, the punishment spans many generations. People suffer for the sins of their ancestors. This troubles many folks. It doesn’t seem fair.

However, we’re well accustomed to this in the natural world. We constantly hear in the news that the costs of what we do with the environment or the national debt will be borne by our grandchildren. The advances made in technology, energy, medicine, etc. will affect them too. For better or for worse, what we do impacts the future and the people who will live in it.

Yet, we know that God created this world of cause-and-effect where our actions affect future generations.

If we’re okay with that, why can’t God’s direct actions work the same way?

But there’s also good news.

The punishment is temporary. Justice and righteousness will win in the end. God still loves His people. The remnant will remain. God will be glorified. The Messiah will come.

The news from natural world holds out no such hope.

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. What should we be most embarrassed about?
2. What kind of sins need to be "turned" from?
3. What things in our society most "unglorify" God?
4. What would be some good "preventative" prayers?
5. Why are news reports so negative?

Items for prayer: