

THE POWER OF CONFESSION, DANIEL 9

Unshakable Faith #9

◆**Intro:** We were doing a Life Group exercise. One circle of people stood facing outward. Another group of us circled around them facing inward, person for person. With each question read we rotated in opposite directions answering to each other the leader's questions as we went. I clearly remember rotating until I was in front of Tammy (not her real name). The leader read the question: What are you most looking forward to about entering heaven? Tammy explained how much she missed her grandfather and was excited by the promise to meet him again in heaven, since he too was a believer in Jesus. Then she said, "What about you?" I said, "I most look forward to being done with sin." It caught her off guard I guess because she froze for a split second and then said, "Well, yeah! That too."

◆I have to admit that when I was a boy I wasn't nearly as bothered by sin as I am now. I certainly didn't notice much of my own then. I didn't notice the double-talk of politicians then either, or the lies of salespeople. Back then it really wasn't hard to know if you were a boy or a girl, we just followed the science. But get a little older, try to raise a family that's mostly law-abiding, non-rebellious, quality contributors to the world's need for peace and beauty –and you become more and more aware of how many things go wrong. Try to protect them from insane ideas shoved at them in school or on TV, and you start to notice the reality of evil. Try to live harmoniously and exclusively for the rest of your life with one person of the opposite sex, to whom

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your life and well-being is dedicated above all others, while thinking that harmony means you two will someday see all things exactly the same way... and you discover how selfish we can be even in our most loving relationships.

◆ That's one reason why I find Daniel 9 encouraging. Like many of us, Daniel is hoping for the better world. In his context it included a return from exile to the Promised Land of his people. They are now about 68 years into captivity which the prophet Jeremiah had clearly said would last 70 years.

◆ *Jeremiah 29:10-11 This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

◆ To prepare the way for this, Daniel prays an earnest prayer of confession of sin for himself and his nation. He is very aware that sin is what causes our darkness and makes us captives, whether it be in Babylon, or jail, or in the misery of our own home. It's a spiritual equation! You can tell Daniel knows this because he alludes to Moses in v11b! In Deuteronomy 28, for 53 verses, Moses spells out the negative results of not obeying God's designs and laws. That chapter is not for the faint of heart. Would you like to hear just four of those verses about what happens if you disobey?

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◆Deuteronomy 28:30-34 You will be pledged to be married to a woman, but another will take her and ravish her. You will build a house, but you will not live in it. You will plant a vineyard, but you will not even begin to enjoy its fruit. Your ox will be slaughtered before your eyes, but you will eat none of it. Your donkey will be forcibly taken from you and will not be returned. Your sheep will be given to your enemies, and no one will rescue them. Your sons and daughters will be given to another nation, and you will wear out your eyes watching for them day after day, powerless to lift a hand. A people that you do not know will eat what your land and labor produce, and you will have nothing but cruel oppression all your days. The sights you see will drive you mad.

◆Moses foretold the exile they found themselves in, there in Babylon! So Daniel, who knew God's records, begins to pray about their disobedience.

◆**1. We know from Daniel's prayer that restoration comes about through confession and repentance.** Daniel is a model follower of God. Angels from heaven repeatedly are dispatched to tell him present day things as well as happenings hundred's of years into the future. So we do well to notice his spiritual sensitivities. Most of this prayer in chapter 9 is confession. And it doesn't beat around the bush. He doesn't soften things like they do on the news: "mistakes were made", or "in a regrettable turn of circumstance..." He doesn't slide around the truth like people at congressional hearings:

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- ◆ “Well Senator, if appointed I will be eager to discuss in your office the various possible views of what might constitute a modern definition of color.”
- ◆ No, Daniel is brutally honest about his people and he includes himself in the mix!
 - ◆ v9-11 we have rebelled against him; we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you...
 - ◆ v13 we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth
 - ◆ v14 we have not obeyed him.
- ◆ A. Certainly we learn from Daniel’s prayer that I must take sin much more seriously than I do. We have to wonder how our prayers compare to Daniel’s model. We already know from earlier in the book that talking things over with God is so vital to Daniel that he does it three times a day, kneeling and taking the time. Not that it’s wrong to pray while you put on make-up or shave, but the depth of attention is not the same as Daniel’s decisions to fast (go without food for the purpose of concentrating on talking with God), to put on uncomfortable sackcloth and ash from the fireplace (v3 a sign of hopeless dependence of mercy). Daniel is being very careful to attend to prayer, and not get sidetracked by a Tik Toc or Snap Chat alert on his phone. Daniel knows that behind all the garbage we complain about in life stands the ugly

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reality of disobedience to the ways of the Maker. He knows that the only path through human sin is repentance. But to repent one must notice and confess.

◆ *Psalms 32:3-5 When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"— and you forgave the guilt of my sin.*

◆ I know what you're thinking, "Wow this is such a downer, man!" but what many don't realize is that your family doesn't get better by pretending something didn't happen. The psychological reality is, emotions are NOT mended by time. Offense builds up in the human soul. They come out later in a myriad of symptoms: depression, anxiety, sexual disfunction, etc. And marriages don't get better by sweeping things under the rug. Trust isn't rebuilt because you give a present, or money. Only recognizing the wrong done, and repenting of it gives power for reconciliation among people.

◆ *Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,*

◆ One marriage enrichment seminar Sandi and I attended taught us the 9 essential words of apology: "I was wrong; I am sorry; please forgive me." Briefly here's why all nine are so effective:

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- ◆ I can be wrong and not sorry. I can be sorry as an act of regret, but also not think I am wrong. I can be wrong and not care how you feel. Asking for forgiveness acknowledges both my guilt and your hurt. All three phrases cover things the best.
- ◆ When the Ku Waru warriors of Papua New Guinea were about to launch any risky activity that required close cooperation—like going into battle—they first took time to set themselves right. Not only overt actions, but even hidden feelings had to be revealed. The Ku Waru men would go to a secluded spot in the jungle, kill and roast pigs, and as they shared the meal, confess to each other the items they had stolen and the animals they had mistreated. But there was still more on the agenda. The Ku Waru believed that feelings such as anger or jealousy would sap their strength and cause them to be wounded or even killed. Only through confession could these pent-up negative emotions be neutralized. [The Ku Waru understand an important truth.] Only by facing our faults, misdeeds, and hateful or jealous thoughts can we be made whole again. Only then can they, and we, be at full strength and ready to face a marauding tribe ... or the kids at home.
- ◆ Confession and repentance holds great power in any relationship. Your most basic relationship is the one you have with God whether you admit it or not. A case could be made that we ought include confession in every prayer we pray. Yet I'm

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willing to bet most people in this room rarely include it. Add it to your talks with God, friends. Daniel knows that God promised 70 years and then a return to the Promised Land. But Daniel knows punishment of exile is not enough to reconcile his people to God. Daniel perceives that they need to be forgiven. For that to happen they need to be sorry!

◆ There are other advantages to confession and repentance that would be worth considering at this point.

◆ B. I must reveal my sin if I want to break it's power. This is true across the board. Take any habit, or especially an addiction. You know something is addictive when after you dabble in it, your mind shrinks down to a small little world where all you can think about is that one desire. Anything addictive needs outside assistance to beat. Please don't lie to yourself that you can handle it alone. Many young people think this, but if you are telling yourself that you can say no to sin all by yourself, you are fooling yourself. My whole adult life I have always had a men's group, or accountability partners, protective software on my devices, all because it is increasingly evident that sin is not something one conquers alone. It just doesn't happen.

◆ *Proverbs 28:13 He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.*

◆ Listen, if there is any wrong in your life where you are coming to realize that you can't control it, go to God first, and then to other people. Confess it and ask God to forgive you. Get it out on

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the table with trusted friends or family. When a temptation arises in your mind, call a friend right away and ask for prayer. You will find that merely saying it out loud (confession) breaks a huge part of its hold on you. Evil thrives in darkness. Bring it into the light and it begins to dissolve like a witch in dirty dishwater!

✦ **2. God's grace is always greater than my sin.** That is to say, God doesn't parcel out grace merely in proportion to our sin. So you do not need to fear to confess to him! The Psalmist says he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay iniquity. And in addition, he goes far beyond in love (Ps.103:10-11) Another thing that Daniel 9 accents, as does much of scripture, is that God's graciousness always far exceeds our deserving. That is, he piles grace on top of forgiveness! Let's observe it in Daniel 9. The chapter has two parts: Part 1 is Daniel's prayer of confession in preparation for God's promise to bring the people back from exile after 70 years. Part 2 is God answering the prayer with another prophecy, this time of 70 periods of 7 years! Now this passage is highly debated and has been in Christian circles since the early centuries. Vast and complicated mathematical charts of dates and historical events have been proposed which is beyond the scope of a single sermon in my view. What I want to observe is an overall view. God's revelation to Daniel can be summarized like this: "Daniel, not only are the 70 years of exile ending, but there is another a period of time (the 70 weeks of years) coming and guess what I am going to accomplish in it: transgression will

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be finished (24), there will be an end to sin, wickedness will be atoned for, everlasting righteousness will ensue, this prophecy will be completed, and the Holy One anointed. How? My Messiah (25) will come. He will be killed (26). And sorry to say, another despotic ruler will destroy Jerusalem and the temple again, just like Nebuchadnezzar did in 586BC. This has been told before. We also know that in the end God's kingdom prevails.

◆ Well, friends, whatever is to be made of the symbolism of the 70 periods of 7, history has shown us this: since Gabriel told Daniel all this, Jerusalem was rebuilt, as was its temple; the people of Israel continued in wickedness; the Messiah Jesus did come, and was cut off/killed for the atonement of human sin on a Roman cross; in 70AD Roman Emperor Titus leveled Jerusalem and Israel as a nation ceased to exist. But Jesus resurrected, and the church family his resurrection started is alive and well.

◆ *Hebrews 9:26-28 But now, once for all time, he has appeared at the end of the age to remove sin by his own death as a sacrifice. And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, so also Christ died once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him.*

◆ With Jesus birth, death and resurrection we are at the "End of the Age". Sin and death have been dealt the blow of death. And Jesus will return to put all things right. Your most important

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response to this truth is the content of Daniel's prayer: confess your sins, and believe in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of them. It settles your eternity, and it breaks evil power now.