



# gracefellowship

Daniel: Thriving in Exile  
November 29, 2020  
God: The Covenant Keeper

Have you ever made a promise to someone and then broken it? Perhaps it was something small and insignificant, like telling your wife you would empty the dishwasher and then forgetting. Or maybe it's something much bigger- promising you would be at an event for your kids and then something popped up at work last minute, so you couldn't go. Broken promises can hurt relationships!

As we get into Daniel 9 this morning we are finally going to see the reason why the people of God have been in captivity in Babylon in the first place. I don't know if you've asked yourself that question throughout this series or not, but it is not a random occurrence that God's people find themselves removed from their home land and in captivity in the nation of Babylon. They find themselves in this situation due to a broken promise- actually it is much more serious than that- they broke God's covenant.

To fully appreciate the context of Daniel 9 today we have to go back and read some passages of Scripture that will give us the back story of why this has all happened to the people of God in the first place. As we read together I hope you'll see how all of Scripture is telling one story and how it ties in together. Then as we move beyond Daniel I hope to show you how God is still at work today to keep His covenant with His people.

The first thing you need to know is that...

**God is a covenant giver and keeper.**

By the time of Daniel we have seen God make multiple covenants with His people.

- He made a covenant with Adam and Eve that one day a rescuer would come and crush the head of the serpent.
- He made a covenant with Noah never to destroy the earth by water again.
- He made a covenant with Abraham that he would have descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky; they would have a great land and through them the entire world would be blessed.
- He made a covenant with David that he would never fail to have someone sitting on his throne because an eternal ruler would come from his family.

When the people of God entered into the promised land following their exodus from Egypt, Joshua, who was their leader at the time, called all the Israelites together and told them this...

**:: Joshua 23:14-16**

**14 “Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.**

**15 But just as all the good things the LORD your God has promised you have come to you, so he will bring on you all the evil things he has threatened, until the LORD your God has destroyed you from this good land he has given you.**

**16 If you violate the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, the LORD’s anger will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from the good land he has given you.”**

Joshua gives the people a recap of their history and the work of God on their behalf to bring them to this new land. Then he continues...

**:: Joshua 24:14-24**

**14 “Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.**

**15 But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”**

**16 Then the people answered, “Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods!**

**17 It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our parents up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled.**

**18 And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God.”**

**19 Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins.**

**20 If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you.”**

**21 But the people said to Joshua, “No! We will serve the LORD.”**

**22 Then Joshua said, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD.” “Yes, we are witnesses,” they replied.**

**23 “Now then,” said Joshua, “throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.”**

**24 And the people said to Joshua, “We will serve the LORD our God and obey him.”**

Over time the people did not keep their part of the covenant and pursued the worship of false gods and broke the commands of God about how to live in the land He gave them. That gets us caught up historically to the book of Daniel and sets the stage for why the exile to Babylon happened in the first place. Just before Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem, the Prophet Jeremiah made this declaration to the people of Judah:

**:: Jeremiah 25:1-14**

**1 The word came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.**

**2 So Jeremiah the prophet said to all the people of Judah and to all those living in Jerusalem:**

**3 For twenty-three years—from the thirteenth year of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah until this very day—the word of the LORD has come to me and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened.**

**4 And though the LORD has sent all his servants the prophets to you again and again, you have not listened or paid any attention.**

**5 They said, “Turn now, each of you, from your evil ways and your evil practices, and you can stay in the land the LORD gave to you and your ancestors for ever and ever.**

**6 Do not follow other gods to serve and worship them; do not arouse my anger with what your hands have made. Then I will not harm you.”**

**7 “But you did not listen to me,” declares the LORD, “and you have aroused my anger with what your hands have made, and you have brought harm to yourselves.”**

**8 Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: “Because you have not listened to my words,**

**9 I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,” declares the LORD, “and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin.**

**10 I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp.**

**11 This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.**

**12 “But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt,” declares the LORD, “and will make it desolate forever.**

**13 I will bring on that land all the things I have spoken against it, all that are written in this book and prophesied by Jeremiah against all the nations.  
14 They themselves will be enslaved by many nations and great kings; I will repay them according to their deeds and the work of their hands.”**

Then again in Jeremiah 29, following the first conquest of Israel, when Daniel was taken into captivity, Jeremiah writes a letter to the exiles in Babylon telling them what to expect and what to do.

Many of us know the famous verse in Jeremiah 29:11; it may hang somewhere in your house, or you've gotten it tattooed on your arm. We cling to that as a verse of promise for our lives, but when Jeremiah wrote it he did so in the context of telling the people God was punishing them for their disobedience, but he would one day bring their children back to the Promised Land.

**:: Jeremiah 29:1-14**

**1 This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.**

**2 (This was after King Jehoiachin and the queen mother, the court officials and the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the skilled workers and the artisans had gone into exile from Jerusalem.)**

**3 He entrusted the letter to Elash son of Shaphan and to Gemariah son of Hilkiyah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. It said:**

**4 This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon:**

**5 “Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce.**

**6 Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease.**

**7 Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”**

**8 Yes, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have.**

**9 They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them,” declares the LORD.**

**10 This is what the LORD says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place.**

**11 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.**

**12 Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.**

**13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.**

**14 I will be found by you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”**

**When judgment comes from God against His people it is only after years of trying to get them to turn back to Him and after giving them multiple chances to repent.**

God is not quick in his punishment and He is not vindictive or mean. He is slow to anger and abounds in love. But like any good parent or any just judge, a time comes when there must be discipline for rebellion and breaking the law.

As the people of God experience His punishment and are sent into exile Jeremiah tells the people to get comfortable in Babylon- they are going to be there a while! Build houses; take wives; have children; pray for the success of the city- because you're well-being depends on its success! But then verses 12-14 have special significance for where we find ourselves in the book of Daniel today. For the second time the Israelites are told there will be 70 years of exile, but then they will pray to God and He will listen to them. They will seek Him and find Him because they seek Him with all their heart. In seeking God with all their heart once again, He will allow them to return to Israel.

Now pick up with me in the book of Daniel and let's see what takes place.

**:: Daniel 9:1-3**

**1 In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom—**

**2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.**

**3 So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.**

**Daniel's prayer was stimulated by reading Scripture.**

He was reading the scroll of Jeremiah when he came to understand that the time of exile was prophesied to last 70 years. When my prayer life gets stale or repetitive I like to turn to the Bible as my guide to pray. I will open to the Psalms or Proverbs most often, but all of Scripture can be used for a guide to know how to communicate with God. As we read His Word we understand what He is saying and doing in the world then we repeat to Him in prayer His attributes and His ways, asking Him to give us a role to play in His work in the world. Often

praying Scripture will lead me to repent of sin that has been lodged in my heart undetected. That's where Daniel lands as he reads the words of Jeremiah. We are told that he fasted and prayed and dressed in sack cloth and ashes. Daniel took seriously what he read and it led him to get serious about prayer.

Now, we already know Daniel was a man of prayer; his discipline got him in a lot of trouble in chapter 6. But in this instance he adds the element of fasting and the traditional sign of brokenness and repentance, putting on sackcloth and ashes. The discipline of fasting is something you will be hearing about more in the new year as we want to lead our church to more actively engage in prayer and fasting, seeking the face of God to move in our lives and our church.

Next we see what Daniel prays.

**:: Daniel 9:4-19**

**4 I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: "Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments,**

**5 we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws.**

**6 We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land.**

**7 "Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame—the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you.**

**8 We and our kings, our princes and our ancestors are covered with shame, LORD, because we have sinned against you.**

**9 The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him;**

**10 we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets.**

**11 All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. "Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you.**

**12 You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing on us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem.**

**13 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.**

**14 The LORD did not hesitate to bring the disaster on us, for the LORD our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him.**

**15 “Now, Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day, we have sinned, we have done wrong.**

**16 Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. Our sins and the iniquities of our ancestors have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us.**

**17 “Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary.**

**18 Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy.**

**19 Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.”**

Here’s what we need to understand as worshippers of God when we read this passage:

**1. God always keeps His covenant.**

Daniel affirms this at the beginning of his prayer and he even says this is a covenant of love. Sometimes we think of the OT covenant and we think it’s all about the Law and observance of rules. But Daniel reminds us that the Law of God was given as an act of love. God knows the best ways for us to live in order to flourish. His law is not given to restrict us, but to free us to enjoy life to its fullest measure. However, sin causes us to break the law of God and go against His covenant, therefore He must punish those who break His law.

**2. God is justified and righteous when He judges.**

Look again at what Daniel says when he prays:

5 we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws.

6 We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land.

7 “Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame—the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you.

8 We and our kings, our princes and our ancestors are covered with shame, LORD, because we have sinned against you.

9 The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him;

10 we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets.

11 All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. “Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you.

12 You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing on us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem.

13 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.

14 The LORD did not hesitate to bring the disaster on us, for the LORD our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him.

God judges sin- and He is right to do so! Our sin is an affront to God’s holiness. Daniel knows this, which is why his prayer is so focused on repentance. His hope is that God might relent in the judgment and allow the people to return home. From what we have already studied in this book we know that Daniel was upright and godly. However, when Daniel is confronted by the words of Jeremiah about the sin of the people, Daniel confesses he is just as guilty as everyone else! Daniel doesn’t tell God that everyone else has sinned; he lumps himself in with the sinful nation. Every part of Daniels’ prayer says WE have sinned, WE have turned away; OUR sin is great...

Daniel is engaging in intercessory prayer on the behalf of his people, but he recognizes he is not innocent before God in these matters. This is a good time for us to mention the fact that...

**There is a big difference between apologizing and repenting of sin.**

When I apologize I know I have been caught doing something wrong, but it doesn’t guarantee a change in my behavior! An apology says, “I’m sorry,” but it may only be a guilt over having been caught!

Repenting is the act of turning away from the sin and turning toward the standards of God’s holiness.

Jesus came to introduce a new covenant between God and man. We could never keep the Law of God perfectly, so a better sacrifice was required. Jesus kept the Law of God perfectly and then died on our behalf, taking the punishment our sins deserved and replacing our sinfulness with His righteousness. The cross is a covenant of grace. God gives us what we don’t deserve- full pardon of our sins by placing our sins on Jesus and punishing Him instead of us!

In the book of Acts the apostle Peter preached a message to a huge crowd of people in Jerusalem about their sins and the sacrifice Jesus made to pay for their sins. After he was finished speaking the people asked him, “What must we do to be saved?” His answer was “Repent and be baptized!” The covenant of God’s grace requires us not only to say we are sorry for our sins, but to turn away from



them, full repentance and then follow the example of Jesus and his command to be baptized. There are too many people who claim to be Christians who will say they are sorry for their sins, but never trust the power of the Holy Spirit to work in their lives to help them turn away from their sins! We must not rationalize our sins before a holy God and think that He will just be ok with our unending apologies! Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins. He wants to rescue you from continuing to live in patterns of sinfulness. It is for freedom that Christ has set us free! We are no longer slaves to sin, but have been liberated by Jesus to walk in new life as new creations!

Here is the final thing I want us to see today:

**3. Daniel appeals to God's righteousness, not the people's reputation when he asks for the exile to end.**

17 "Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary.

18 Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy.

19 Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name."

The people are still sinful. In fact, many have embraced the Babylonian and Persian lifestyles whole-heartedly. Daniel can't appeal to God to restore them to their land based on the people having repented, so he throws himself on the mercy of God. He knows that God keeps His covenant and does not fail to show love. Daniel also asks God to restore His people for the sake of His Name. While the people live in captivity and the city of Jerusalem is in rubble and the nation of Israel is weak, the name of God among the nations gets dragged through the mud!

This is also the beauty of our own salvation. We cannot do anything to earn or deserve salvation. We can't appeal to our own merits to save us from our sin. We throw ourselves on the mercy of God through the cross of Jesus to redeem us from our sin and bring us into His family. It is by grace we are saved, through faith, this not of ourselves, so no one can boast! But then we must respond to this great salvation with great obedience and faithfulness. The salvation we find in Jesus is not a get out of hell free card! It is a call to life-changing obedience as we understand the great cost that was paid to give us salvation.

Christians- are you living in the freedom of repentance? Are you actively pursuing a relationship with Jesus and walking in light of His grace? What do you keep asking forgiveness for that you have no intention of walking away from? We need to live in a state of repentance where we turn away from our sin and walk toward the love of God.

Those who would not call themselves a follower of Jesus- Your sin deserves punishment; and God is right and just to punish anyone who doesn't receive His gift of salvation and walk in the ways of Jesus. Unlike the exile of the Jewish people to Babylon, rejecting the gift of salvation results in an eternal punishment. Like Daniel, repent of your sin, throw yourself at the mercy of God, who saves, not because of your reputation or goodness, but because of His great love! Once you are saved and brought into God's family He keeps His covenant of salvation forever! There is nothing that can separate you from His love.

- Pray