

hand in Hand Sermon Outline

An Astonishing Partnership

Daniel 9

God—the King of kings and Lord of Lords, the Sovereign of the universe—desires to create a working partnership with His people in order to accomplish some part of His divine purposes. When we respond to Him in faith and freely choose to follow His lead, amazing things can happen.

I. Daniel began with God, not himself (vv. 1-2)


- Daniel spent time in the Scriptures because he wanted and expected to hear from God (apparently his regular practice).
- He did hear from God, through the late prophet Jeremiah.
- He immediately personalized God's Word, applying it to himself.

II. God's Word prompted Daniel to take aggressive action (vv. 3-19)

Daniel understood from Jeremiah (25:11-13; 29:10) that the exile would last seventy years. It was now 538-539 B.C., less than fifty years after Babylon destroyed Jerusalem in 587 B.C.; but Daniel and his colleagues had been taken captive clear back in 604 B.C. He thus realized there might be only three or four years left before the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy. Therefore:

- Daniel "pleaded" with God in "prayer" and "petition" (v. 3). He was serious, earnest, and energetic. "Pleaded" from Heb. *baqas*, "seek, search, beg, pursue."
- Daniel "confessed" the sin of his people as if those sins were his own (vv. 4-16). He declared that "we" have: "sinned," "done wrong," "been wicked," "rebelled," "turned away" from God's commands (vv. 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15, 16); "not listened" to God's prophets (v. 6); "are covered with shame" because of "our unfaithfulness" (vv. 7, 8); "not obeyed" God or "kept" his laws (v. 10, 11, 14); "transgressed" God's law (v. 11);





“have not sought the favor of the Lord” by “turning from our sins and giving attention” to God’s truth (v. 13).

- Daniel made several specific requests of God on behalf of his exiled people: Turn away Your wrath from Jerusalem (v. 16); hear my prayers and petitions (v. 17); Look with favor on Your desolate sanctuary (v. 17); Open Your eyes and see the ruin of Jerusalem (v. 18); Listen, forgive, hear, act, do not delay (v. 19).
- Daniel anchored his prayer in God’s unchanging character, calling Him: “the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands” (v. 4); “righteous” (v. 7, 14); “merciful and forgiving” (v. 9); “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” (v. 15).
- Daniel made his requests, not on the basis of human merit, but on the basis of God’s own nature and record: “in keeping with all your righteous acts” (v. 16); “for your sake” (v. 17); “because of your great mercy” (v. 18); “because your city and your people bear your Name” (v. 19).

Daniel saw no contradiction between God’s sovereign promise to restore Israel to the Promised Land after seventy years of exile, and his own fervent prayer that God would return Israel to her land after seventy years of exile. The promise *fueled* his prayer, it did not weaken it. He did not see his prayer as superfluous. So did he understand something that we so often don’t about how divine sovereignty works hand in hand with human responsibility?

III. **God responded to Daniel’s prayer in an astonishing way.**

- Even while Daniel was still in prayer, he received an answer (vv. 20, 21). In fact, an answer was issued as soon as he began to pray (v. 23).
- Daniel had prayed only that Israel might be restored to her land after seventy years of exile; God gave him a sweeping prophetic vision of the consummation of Israel’s whole relationship with God that would take seventy “sevens.”
- Daniel 9 gives us a superb illustration of two famous verses in Ephesians. In Ephesians



3:20, God is pictured as the One who can “do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.” God’s Word prompted Daniel to energetic action, and God responded with more than Daniel had ever imagined. Would he have received the remarkable revelation of Daniel 9:20-27, if he had not responded with such energy to God’s sovereign promise? Pondering God’s sovereignty should prompt *us* to more action, not less; if it doesn’t, we have taken a wrong turn somewhere.

Daniel also illustrates Ephesians 2:10, which says, “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” As we launch out in faith (as Daniel did), fueled by God’s promises, God empowers us to do the “good works” that he prepared “in advance for us to do.” What sort of things “immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine” does he want to partner with us to accomplish, “according to his power that is at work within us”? How will we ever know unless we follow Daniel’s example?

*Possible illustrations from **Hand in Hand**: Randy’s abortion lawsuit story (pp. 132-134); the Yucca moth and plant (p. 136); Spurgeon quotes (pp. 157-160); Simeon quotes (pp. 160-166).*