

“Daniel: Living in Babylon” series

Week 9: Confession and Repentance

May 10, 2026

Psalm 32:1 Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. 2 Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. 3 When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. 5 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.

Introduction

- If you haven't been with us, we are almost at the end of teaching series based on the book of Daniel.
- We entitled it “Living in Babylon” because the book is about how Daniel was taken captive as a teenager from his home country and lived his entire life in a foreign land.
- It is instructive in showing us how to make a difference when living in a culture that does not share the values of the God that we serve, and what to do when the pull of that culture can often take us in the wrong direction.
- We looked at how we live in order to make a difference – which is what God has invited us into. When we live differently, with Jesus as our king, living out his values, letting him change who we are, we will make an difference in the lives of people around us that will carry into eternity.
- What we saw last week is that the second half of the book of Daniel records a bunch of strange visions. Visions that Daniel had that showed pictures of the future, of things that had yet to happen, strange pictures and dreams and visions that needed interpretation.
- Each of these visions underscored a truth that goes through this entire book – that God is in control of all things, from worldwide things like the movement of world powers and governments down to the details of what happens to your life. He is sovereign, he is loving, and that's why we can trust him.
- I'm curious what thoughts go through your mind when I talk about these two words:
- Confession and repentance?
- Is your reaction positive? Fearful? Negative? A little of each?
- Confession and repentance are core practices for those who follow Jesus, yet we probably don't talk about it or practice it enough. It is easy to get a little reluctant in this area.
- Most of us desire freedom.
- We want to live without anxiety and anger.
- We would love it if we could get rid of all our guilt and shame.
- We would love to have confidence, to see God work.
- Here's the thing: **The path to that kind of freedom is paved with confession and repentance.**

Main Sermon Text

- When Daniel was an older person, probably in his late 70's or early 80's, there was a change of government. The Babylonian empire was conquered by the Persian empire. It was a time of change, turmoil, violence and more.

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.

- Just like with his other visions, the massive change in his circumstances, with all the uncertainty connected to it, caused Daniel to dig deep into God.
- As he did, he was reading the words of Jeremiah the prophet. Jeremiah had lived only decades early. He had warned Israel over and over what would happen if they disobeyed. He told them they would suffer for disobedience. He also had talked and written about restoration.

Jeremiah 25:11 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.”

Jeremiah 29:10 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.”

- Daniel himself has been in captivity for close to 70 yrs, so it sounded like God would be bringing his people back home, to their land, to their city, to see the temple rebuilt. Daniel had hope. We see what he did in response.

3 So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. 4 I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed:

- This sets up the rest of the chapter. Like most of these that we are studying, we don't have the time to read it all – we are going to highlight some aspects – I would encourage you to read it all for yourselves.
- What I find most instructive in this is how and what Daniel prayed.
- You might expect that he would be asking God for him to bring Israel back to their homeland (and he does) and you might expect him to make requests and petition (which he also does), but what he leads with and what he emphasizes in his prayers is different than what we might expect.
- He spends the vast majority of this recorded prayer in confession and repentance.
- Most of us when asking God to do something probably don't spend most of our time confessing and repenting. Why did he do this?

I. Confession and repentance

A. It restores relationship with God and others.

- Without going into too much detail, Daniel's entire confession is based on Israel's covenant with God from centuries earlier.
- Essentially, God had told Israel what it looked like to follow him and hold to his values. He promised them that he would continue to walk alongside them as a nation. He was patient with them, he taught them, he gave them laws, all to help them have the kind of life that came from a relationship with himself.
- Israel had rejected this. God punished their nation because they abandoned him. They went their own way. They rejected God in favor of living life their own ways.
- So God let them be conquered and to suffer.

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.

- Daniel's confession admits that their people have wandered from God. It has damaged them. He is asking for God to restore them to relationship with him and together as a nation.
- If you hear nothing else this morning, hear this.
- God calls every person to confess and repent because he wants a relationship with us and he desires us to have fulfilling relationships with the people around us.
- We repent BECAUSE he loves us, not to earn it.

- The baptisms you saw this morning are a testimony to this. These are people who have realized that they have sinned. They have proclaimed that on their own, they cannot be right. They need God. They need his forgiveness. They have chosen to follow him. Their baptism is a picture of their confession and repentance.
- Not only does it restore relationship, confession and repentance:

B. Aligns us with God's agenda.

- This is super important. One of the reasons we don't regularly confess and repent regularly and honestly is because we miss this.
- God's intent is to align your heart, your mind, your behavior, your life, with him and his ways and values, because he is the only one to give us the peace, joy and hope we desire.
- It is interesting that Daniel does not ask God to take them back to their land and restore their nation because they had "paid their dues" and promised that they would "do better."
- He asks because he wants God's agenda to be carried out.

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."

- His concern was for what was important to God. God's reputation. He was going to adjust his life and his behavior to match God's.
- Consider, if you have never accepted Jesus as your Savior, when you confess your sins to him, and let him be Lord and king of your life, you are aligning yourself with him. You are admitting that you cannot get to heaven on your own, you cannot do life well selfishly, and that you have sinned and need to be forgiven.
- If you have done this, as these people who were baptized have testified, then every time God brings something to our attention to confess and repent, it is because we are out of alignment with him and he desires us to get in alignment.
- Why, because when you hold onto sin, and keep control of your life, your life will run exactly what a car that is severely out of alignment does. It will be rough, problematic, you will have to fight to keep on path and eventually the car will break down.
- So how do we do all this? What does it look like?

II. Confession and repentance requires:

A. A posture of humility

- We read that Daniel approached God with sackcloth and ashes. Sackcloth was a coarse material, like burlap. Consider how it would feel if you wore a material like this. Or wearing an itchy wool sweater next to your skin. It is uncomfortable and it symbolizes the distress of the wearer. Ashes were worn on the head or body to signify destruction, to show the seriousness of the problem.
- And because they were external, they were visible. This was not just an internal struggle.
- It was a public display of humility and need.
- He also fasted, which was denying the basic need of food. This was an internal display of humility and need. It was going without because of the seriousness of a desire.
- There is a direct connection between humility and confession. Proud people don't confess. They don't repent. They blame. They excuse. They posture. They defend.
- And since our sinful nature doesn't naturally go those places, confession and repentance puts us in a place where we have to humble ourselves. Make no mistake. It is a choice. We never confess only when we "feel like it."

- God is not interested in simply making us grovel. He is interested in us being in a place where we can hear him and adjust our lives to him. Without a posture of humility, this will never happen.

B. Accepting responsibility for our sin.

- Daniel is brutally honest in his confession.
5 we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws.
8 We and our kings, our princes and our ancestors are covered with shame, LORD, because we have sinned against you.
- As Daniel comes to God, he doesn't equivocate or hedge or excuse anything.
- He admits to wrongs, fully and straight up.
- Our tendency in confession is to excuse it ("Look what they did. . ."). We minimize it ("At least I didn't. . ."). We confess partially and admit the minimum.
- Daniel, a man whom we have no recorded sin about (one of the only main characters in Scripture like this) took responsibility for his own sin AND he took responsibility for the sins of the nation. He was confessing on behalf of others.
- That would be like you confessing for your part in a fight and for the other person's part in the fight, and owning both of them.
- He could do that because his focus was son God. The issue here was never himself, it was the contrast between Israel's unfaithfulness and God's mercy, love and faithfulness.

C. Taking the consequences of the sin seriously.

- Between the law and prophets, Daniel knew the people had no excuse for their sin and that the consequences of their sin was disastrous.
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.
- They knew the consequences but perhaps they rationalized their behavior.
- Maybe they had become presumptuous because of God's patience with them. They perhaps doubted that God would follow through with his threats.
- Regardless, Daniel recognized the seriousness of the sin and admitted that God was just in his punishment.
- This is not about religion or being religious. Religion is all about rules and trying to feel good about yourself. I have no time for that. This is about a God who created us, loves us deeply and wants us to find him for freedom in this life and amazing freedom and joy in the next.
- Not one person will die, stand in front of God, and be able to say, "God, that's not fair. I lived a good life."

Conclusion

- **The path to freedom is paved with confession and repentance.**
- Have you never accepted God's forgiveness, his sacrifice by having his son die in your place for the punishment you deserve? Are you trying to live life your own way, under your control? Come to him to find freedom.
- If you have accepted Jesus but now, years later, you find that you are struggling with guilt and shame and feel bound up by certain things. Come to Jesus with it to find freedom.
- What is stopping you today?
- You might be unaware of your need (God will show you, not to punish you, but to draw you to himself)
- You are worried about your reputation. This will keep you in bondage.
- You don't want to change – you kinda like all that you are doing. There are always consequences to sin.
- You don't think your sin is all that serious. Yet those sins sent the God of this world to the cross to die on your behalf.
- Jesus came and lived and died because he saw our need. He was the only one who had no personal need for forgiveness, but he knew we did.
- Jesus did not worry about his reputation – he went to the cross for us even though he was mocked, scorned and ridiculed on the way.
- Our faith is still not based on our good works, but on the work of Jesus. His faithfulness, rather than our obedience, is the driver for salvation. Having a relationship with God is based on Jesus' work.
- So this morning, the invitation is to come. The last song is called O Come to the altar. To come is to humble yourself, to be honest with God, to own your stuff, and invite him in forgive you and realign you with him.