

(PP) Take your Bibles and turn with me please to Daniel chapter 9

I was planning on going in a different direction this morning since LRW is coming up next weekend

- I wanted to take another passage and speak on revival and renewal and how we need to turn back to God

But then the neatest thing happened

- I was reading ahead in Daniel 9 to see what it was about
- And I saw that it was exactly about the subject I wanted to preach on

- Daniel is confessing his sins and the sins of his people
- He is asking God for forgiveness and mercy

- He wants to see revival and renewal among his people
- He wants to see them turn back to Him

Even before we read the text and talk about it

- I want to praise the Lord for the way He gives a church exactly what it needs down to the very week

This is what Daniel prayed 2,500 years ago as he prayed for Jerusalem

- And this is exactly what we need today at Locust Hill

Even though we started this book months ago

- With no advance planning on my part
- We have a passage today that meets our needs perfectly from His Word

That tells me that God is in control of Locust Hill Church

- He arranged this because He desires to meet with us today... and this week... and next weekend... and beyond that
- His Spirit is guiding what is going on at the church
- He wants to move in our hearts
- He has so more for us than what we've experienced up to now

Are you open to what God is doing?

Will you respond to Him by faith?

Let's see what God has for us now through the book of Daniel

- **Daniel 9:1-19** (No PowerPoint)

(PP) Verse 1 says that this vision is given in the first year of Darius

- So this is about 11 years after the vision in chapter 8

Daniel is probably 80 years old by now

- We've been with him from his teenage to senior adult years

Now the context of what is taking place is that Daniel has been reading the Bible

- (Specifically the prophet Jeremiah)
- And he realizes that the time of captivity in Babylon is about to end

(PP) Verse 2 says: **in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.**

(PP) What he was reading was Jeremiah 25:11

- It says: **This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.**

Now before we go any further you need to know that Daniel was into serious Bible study

- He didn't take the Word of God lightly

I think the prophets in general were amazing people of God

- They poured their whole heart into God's Word and growing in grace

They wanted to know God

- They wanted to know His Word
- They wanted to know His plan and purpose for their lives and for the people of God

There is a passage in First Peter that tells us how intently the Old Testament prophets studied the Bible

In 1 Peter 1, it is talking about how passionately they studied the prophecies to learn more about the coming Messiah, our Savior Jesus

- (PP) Verses 10-11 say: **Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.**

That's how intently they were studying to learn about Christ and that's how intently Daniel was studying Jeremiah to learn about the captivity

- That's how God wants you to study and seek Him
- Not half-heartedly or disinterested
- But intently
- Seeking the truth in the Word

So long story short, Daniel read from the prophet Jeremiah and understood not only how long they would be in Babylon, but why they were there in the first place

- He learned that it was because of their sin
- God was punishing them
- They had forgotten about Him
- They had left Him
- They had grown cold and complacent
- They had not been seeking Him intently, with all their heart

Now if we were to study the Jews of that day you would find them to be outwardly very religious people

- They attended religious services
- They knew how to talk religious talk
- But their hearts had grown cold to the things of God
- They had replaced God in their hearts with many other loves

When Jesus spoke to the Pharisees years later that's exactly what He said to them

- (PP) Matthew 23:25-26: **Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.**

Do you think that's where some of us may be today?

We're going through the outward motions of religion

- But on the inside we are in need of revival and awakening
- There's no fire, no burden, no real desire

What we don't realize is how easy it is to stray off course

- We still wake up and come to church
- We can talk the talk when we need to
- But we're indifferent to the things of God
- We're cold

(PP) Revelation 3:15-16 tells us what God thinks of half-hearted followers: **I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.**

What God wanted back then and what God wants today is the same

- He wants us to love Him heart, soul, mind and strength
- To intently seek Him
- To repent and return to Him

If you don't think you need revival today

- *You're the one who needs it most*

This is where the Jews were in Daniel's day, so God used Babylon to punish them

- To get their attention spiritually and see if they would open their eyes

So what's going on today in chapter 9 is that Daniel determined that the length of the captivity would be 70 years

- He understood that God's people were about to return home

Now just to build your confidence even more in God's perfect Word

- Let me share two verses with you from Jeremiah

Not only was Daniel given such perfect insight into the future

- But the words given to him connect perfectly with those given to the other prophets of different times

(PP) Jeremiah 25:12 says: **Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the Lord, making the land an everlasting waste.**

(PP) Then Jeremiah 29:10 is the verse that Daniel read that gave him such hope for the future.

- Catch this: **"For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place.**

Isn't God's Word awesome?

So what's the point I'm trying to make by all this?

It's that Daniel read the Word of God and understood the times in which he lived

- He understood that God was about to give His people a second chance

He saw that his people were at a crossroads

- They had an opportunity for a fresh start and to do things the right way this time

Listen: this is crucial

- He knew the time was right for his people to return to their homeland **physically**
- But he wanted them to return **spiritually** as well

And that is where we are today as a church

- That is what Daniel has to say to us today

I can't say we've been in captivity for 70 long years in a foreign land

- I can't even say that the majority of us have been absent from God
- But some of us have been missing none the less
- Some of us are not living the lives God has for us
- Some of us lack the desire to live for Christ
- Some of us lack the fire to burn brightly for God
- Some of us are worldly, ungodly, carnal

I told you last week how thankful I was to God for the good things I see going on here

- Our giving has been strong
- Our attendance has been good
- There seems to be a good spirit in the church
- We seem to be growing close in unity
- People are growing in Christ and in the Word of God
- The number of people serving in different ministries has been impressive

But someone made the comment that Locust Hill has a habit of doing this...

- We'll grow, grow, grow...
- Then something happens and we'll decline, decline, decline...
- Then grow, grow, grow...
- And decline, decline, decline...

Why is that?

Someone might say it is because pastors come and go...

- Someone else might say that certain situations aren't handled just right...
- Others might say the enemy comes in and messes things up...

But at the end of the day what matters the most is if we're going to learn from the past and do things differently in the future

- If we're going to break that cycle of growth and decline and grow in faithfulness and obedience

We have an opportunity to stop and seek the Lord today

I believe we have an opportunity through Lay Renewal Weekend to come together as a church and confess our sin to God

- To ask for His direction for the future
- To ask Him to protect us and help us guard our unity
- To ask Him for wisdom for everything that lies ahead

I know I've gotten a bit off track from Daniel 9

- But this is what I see Daniel doing back in the text for his people
- That's what I see us needing today

Do you understand where Daniel was and where we are today?

We're standing at a crossroads...

- *Will things be different this time or will we go back and do the same things all over again?*

So verse 3 tells us what Daniel did

- He did what all godly men and women have done when they needed revival and renewal
- He sought the Lord and prayed

(PP) Daniel 9:3 says: **Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.**

This chapter goes on to share more of Daniel's prayer to God

- What I'd like to share with you now are some of the things I see in the way he sought the Lord

(PP) **The best thing I know to call it is general principles of revival and renewal**

- I've pulled all these from the text

(PP) **First, revival and renewal have to be personal**

Revival is something that God gives by His sovereign hand

- His Spirit falls upon people in a fresh way and brings them back to Him
- He gives them new life

But when He does that it causes people to take account of their own lives

- People take responsibility for their own spiritual condition as well as that of their church, their community, their country

Notice how personal Daniel's prayer is

- Look at all the **I's** and **we's** and **us's** in just in the first few verses
- Almost every verse in the entire chapter uses the first person

What that means is that when we are seeking revival and renewal we have to do so personally

- I have to seek the Lord and you have to seek the Lord

I can't point the finger at you and blame you for where we are today spiritually

- You can't point the finger at me or anyone else
- I have to take responsibility for myself and you have to take responsibility for yourself

It's like that old saying, **the buck stops here**

Spiritually speaking we each need to say that today

I have a part in this

- I'm willing to do what it takes
- I want to do my part

I have a few questions that I like to ask church folks to help us all realize that we are only as strong as a church as our individual members are

Sometimes it seems like in the church we lean heavily on a few people to do everything

- That old 80-20 rule or 90-10 rule
- We let them lead, serve, give, teach, whatever...

Now as I said earlier we're doing better but we're not there yet

- I'm asking you today to make this personal today

So thinking along that line, where would the church be today if everyone were just like you?

- *If the whole church tithed as you do would we be better or worse off financially?*
- *If the whole church attended the way you do would our attendance go up or down?*
- *If the whole church prayed and studied and shared Christ the way you do would we be stronger or weaker spiritually?*
- *If the whole church served the way you do would we have more people serving or less?*
- *If the whole church had your attitude, would we be a happier or a grouchier place to be?*

At the end of the day Locust Hill Baptist Church will only change when individual people change

- When individual people get more on fire for Christ

I take responsibility for my life

- I want God to work in me
- I want a fresh start

(PP) If that's where you are today then say what David said in the Psalms

- **Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.**

But let it start with me Lord, let it be personal

(PP) **Now second, revival and renewal has to be backed by commitment**

I want you to look at the same verse again because I want to point out Daniel's personal commitment to revival and renewal

- It says he was pleading to God
- He was fasting as he prayed
- He put on sackcloth instead of his regular clothes and he poured ashes on his head as a sign of mourning

He made a commitment to seeking the Lord

- He made a significant investment of time and energy

As I've been thinking about revival and renewal I've been quoting old Keith Green lyrics all week

- He's got this one song called asleep in the light talking about how so many of us are here, we have the light of Christ shining on us
- But instead of committing our lives to Christ we're asleep

The song says:

*Oh bless me Lord, bless me Lord, you know it's all I ever hear
No one aches, no one hurts, no one even sheds one tear
But He cries, He weeps, He bleeds, and He cares for your needs
And you just lay back and keep soaking it in,
Oh, can't you see it's such a sin?*

*How can you be so dead when you've been so well fed
Jesus rose from the grave... and you, you can't even get out of bed*

Do you understand where I'm coming from today?

Like the youth preacher a few months ago at Super Sunday

- *Are you picking up what I'm laying down?*

It's like another old saying; **you need to put some skin in the game**

We need every person in the game

- Not only is this personal for me but I'm committed to doing my part

Revival and renewal has to be backed by commitment

(PP) **Now third, revival and renewal has to come with confession of sin**

If you're taking this personally and you are committing yourself to the Lord

- There will be in your heart a growing awareness of sin and a desire to be forgiven and restored by God

None of us are so good, so Christian, such examples of Christian virtue that we have no room for improvement

So even Daniel begins verse 4 by saying: **I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession**

Daniel prayed and the first thing he did was ask for forgiveness of his sins

- Then he went on and prayed for his people as well

He didn't mince his words either as he prayed

- (PP) Verse 5 has him calling it what it is
- **we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules.**

We like to think we're ok

- That everybody sins in this way
- That a little sin is fine
- That God overlooks it

But God does not overlook a little sin and my heart's desire is not to pastor a church that is happy with a little sin

You can find plenty of churches that just want to drift away to their death

They want to crawl up in a hammock and rock themselves to sleep

What do they say to Jesus when He returns for them?

- *Hey Jesus, good to see you, I had a great nap*

Let me ask you this morning

- *Have you obeyed every command of God perfectly?*

I'm not just asking if you obey Ten Commandments

- *Because you don't and I don't*

But is there any sin in your life that you have grown calloused to, cold to, indifferent to?

(PP) Daniel again tells us what the truth is in verse 7

- **To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame**

(PP) Verse 8 says: **To us, O Lord, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you.**

- Verse 9: **for we have rebelled against him...**

Do you see it for what it is?

Oh Lord, I've done this...

- I've not done this...

I've not been the church member, the parent, the spouse you want me to be

I've not loved you the way you asked me to

- I've not spent time seeking you and loving you

Dear friend, what do you need to speak to God about today?

Will you confess your sins to Him?

Revival and renewal has to come with confession of sin

(PP) **And now fourth and finally, revival and renewal is about seeking the Lord again**

At the heart of revival and renewal it's not about church growth

- It's not about getting more people to come to church
- It's not about making our offerings increase
- It's about knowing God again
- About coming back to God through His Son Jesus

Verses 14-15 have Daniel remembering how God had not only punished them for their sin but it was God who had saved them years earlier out of Egypt

- (PP) **Therefore the LORD has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in all the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice. 15 And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly.**

When I think about God saving His people from Egypt

- I think about how He saved us through Jesus
- He died for our sins at the cross and rose again from the dead
- All who turn from their sins and trust in Him are saved

If you've never done so I urge you to come to Christ now and be saved

And if you are a follower of Christ and you're not living a life worthy of the calling of Christian

- Come to Him again today
- Seek Him again
- Ask Him to renew you and revive you

As we begin to move into a time of commitment I want you to listen to how Daniel sought the Lord

- I want you to seek Him like this this morning...
- Listen to His heart...

(PP) Verse 16: **O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away...**

Verse 17: **O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant...**

(PP) Verse 18: **O My God, incline your ear and hear**

Verse 19: **O Lord, hear; 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.**

Is that where you are today?

O God, give us revival and renewal for your name's sake

- Because we are called by your name

Let's pray...