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Daniel's Personal Sense of Responsibility Toward Sin

by Keith Hamilton

“And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.” (Daniel 9:3-6)

Children can recall the story in Daniel 6 of the circumstances that led to Daniel being cast into the den of lions. We remember the rash decree that Darius was tricked into signing by the envious enemies of Daniel. A decree which required punishment for anyone who petitioned another person or gods besides Darius. Daniel's enemies knew his habit of praying to God facing Jerusalem with his windows open. They lay in wait for him to do so and then brought their accusation before the king requiring Darius to comply with the law and sentence Daniel to his death. Daniel was protected by God who sent His angel to stop the mouths of the lions and save Daniel from the fate his enemies intended. It is truly a marvelous and inspirational story of persistent faith.

Daniel's quite resolve to continue serving Jehovah when his faith was challenged and its imagery are indelibly scribed upon the hearts and minds of even small children. If anyone has wondered what Daniel's prayers were like, you need only to turn further into the book to chapter 9. There is recorded a prayer of Daniel that occurred during the first year of Darius. Was this one of the prayers of chapter 6? We do not know. Yet, the prayer of chapter 9 fits perfectly with the circumstances of chapter 6.

Daniel and his fellow Jews were in exile in Babylon because the people of Jerusalem had been punished for their idolatry. Knowing the fidelity of Daniel, it is hard to even conceive that he would personally have been guilty of engaging in idolatry. It would have been easy for Daniel to pray to God agreeing with His righteous judgement to punish the idolators. It would have been easy for Daniel to point his finger at those personally guilty for the sin that brought God's wrath down upon Jerusalem. However, Daniel did not do such in his prayer found in chapter 9. Instead, Daniel makes his “confession” and says, “We have sinned ...” When Daniel used the pronoun “we” he included himself. Though not personally guilty of idolatry, Daniel accepted personal responsibility. That is a rare characteristic. When things go wrong, the course most take is to find blame outside of themselves. One of the people I got to know while working was Bob Nelms. Bob was one of the engineers and scientists who was brought in to investigate what happened when the Challenger exploded. His presentation about their findings from the investigation is extremely intriguing. One of the things that Bob points out was the outright refusal by all parties to accept responsibility for what happened. There was a general abdication of responsibility by those involved in the launch of the Challenger. From his experience, Bob created a presentation he called “The Blame Virus.” He pointed out that finding blame within an organization is like a disease. Instead, Bob suggested to leadership that they ask the following question whenever a problem occurs, “What is it about me that contributed to this problem?” That question is very thought-provoking. It forces each person to look to themselves to see what sense of responsibility they have when a problem occurs. I used this when meeting with various leadership groups to point out to them that they were responsible for every problem that occurred. Oh, I would get immediate push back as managers would say it was not right to accuse them of causing every problem or being the blame for every problem. My response was that I was not saying they were the blame or the cause of every problem, but they were responsible for every problem.

That is a very different perspective that changes one from being reactive to proactive in problem solving. What was it about Daniel that led him to say, "We have sinned..."? Though he would not have participated in idolatry, had he committed the sin of omission by remaining silent while others around him engaged in that sin? Who knows. Is his expression a simple act of contrition? Possibly. Whatever were his motives are lost to us. Yet, let us not lose sight of the fact that Daniel accepted personally the responsibility for the situation the people of Jerusalem found themselves. Though Daniel was not the cause of the problem, he accepted personal responsibility for its solution. Through prayer confessing to God, seeking His forgiveness, and asking for Israel's restoration. Oh, that more of us would examine ourselves and ask the question, "What is it about me that contributes to this problem?" What therefore can I do? For me as a preacher, I have changed the way I challenge others in my sermons. Instead of using the pronoun "you" when identifying sinful actions, I try to say "we." For instance, instead of saying, "If you forsake the assembly, you are doing something sinful." I say, "If we forsake the assembly, we are doing something sinful." It is just my habit, and I understand other preachers may prefer the other. Yet, I like the use of "we" versus "you" because of the sense of personal ownership and accountability. Not to cast blame but to accept responsibility for solving the problems. Sure, I understand that one who has forsaken the assembly has the responsibility to repent. I do not advocate an abdication of responsibility on the part of someone who is guilty. My aim in the process is to examine myself and ask, "What is it about me that has contributed to this problem?" Have I followed Jesus' instructions in Matthew 18? Have I "considered" myself as Paul instructs in Galatians 6:1?

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

Have I been merely reactive, only providing attention to someone after they have fallen away? Was I proactive with encouragement and interest in someone beyond their attendance being part of a number put on a bulletin board in the auditorium?

Yes, Daniel is a great example of a person who accepted personal responsibility. For this reason, God sent His angel (Gabriel) in answer to his prayer to confirm God's love for Daniel: "for thou art greatly beloved, ..." (Daniel 9:23) I pray we will consider his personal sense of responsibility towards sin. Ours and others. Be well and be blessed. Midway Sewanee, TN

"We Know That You Know What We Know"

By Greg Gwin 5/19/26 *Electronic Beacon*

In sports and in warfare there is often a fascinating contest of strategy. Sometimes it is simply stated this way: "We know that you know what we know." Each side studies the other. They know the opponent's tendencies, strengths, and weaknesses.

That same principle applies in our spiritual battle with Satan. Paul said, "We are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11). The devil has certain well-known methods. He is a liar (John 8:44). He makes evil look appealing and harmless (2 Corinthians 11:14). He appeals to "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). And he is constantly looking for an opportunity to destroy the careless Christian (1 Peter 5:8).

None of this is a secret. We know exactly how he works. And Satan knows that we know. That is why one of his most effective tools is to get us to relax. If he can persuade us that sin is not so serious, that one compromise won't hurt, or that we are strong enough to handle temptation on our own, he has gained an advantage.

For this reason the Scriptures repeatedly urge us to stay alert. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13). God has not left us defenseless. He has provided the whole armor of God - truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:11-17).

The good news is that the devil can be defeated. James assures us, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

Satan knows our weaknesses. But we know his tactics. More importantly, we know the strength and faithfulness of the God we serve. If we remain vigilant and trust in Him, we can win the battle.