

Intercessory Prayer

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[0 : 00] So, what we will do is, I'm going to pray for us, but I don't want it to just be me praying. Part of actually what we want to do in the life of the church is we need to, as we're going through this series on prayer, we need to come before God as a congregation and pray together.

So, I'm going to lead us in prayer, but don't just kind of switch off at this moment. Really engage with this. You can feel free to say amen, feel free to just agree in your heart with what God wants us to pray for.

So, I ask you to just bow your heads and let me pray for us. Oh, great and awesome God, the one who stretched out the galaxies and the stars, what is man?

What are us human beings that you think about us? What are we that you actually even care for us? And yet you do.

And yet you came from heaven to identify yourself with us and more than that, to take the weight of our sin upon yourself, to take the punishment for us that we could come and we could call you Abba Father.

[1 : 17] Father, thank you so much that you're our great high priest, the one who enables us to enter into your presence. Thank you that we have this privilege of being called your children.

Thank you for the privilege of prayer this morning. Oh, forgive us, Lord, how lightly we take the privilege of prayer. Forgive us, Lord, because we are a prayerless church in many ways.

We're a church who prays as a last resort, not as a first resort. Forgive us. We worry about our bank accounts. We worry about our careers.

We worry about our convenience. We have made luxuries our necessities. And we complain when life doesn't work our way. And yet we fail to see many who have far less than us have a greater faith, a greater joy, a greater peace, a greater love.

And we long for that, Lord. So please change us. In your mercy, in your great love, would you change us, Lord? Would you forgive us where we are judgmental and critical, where we see everyone else's problems but we don't see our own?

[2 : 28] Would you show us grace as we remember even this Good Friday of what it costs you to bring us to yourself? Father, detach our hearts from the treasures that consume us so we may see the beauty of your glory.

Show us your glory, Lord. Show us who you really are. Make your face to shine upon us, that your presence would fill us, would capture our hearts so we're more consumed with you than what everyone around us is chasing after.

Give us strength to be faithful because it's hard to stay focused on you when there are so many other distractions, Lord. So we ask for you. We ask for your presence.

Show us yourself. And Lord, we want to pray, Father, also in this city. We want to pray for inner city ministries, which is that amazing ministry serving ethnic minorities in Jordan and Yamate.

Lord, thank you for the work that they're doing. Thank you that they're a beacon of light in that area.

Lord, we pray that for all those kids and mothers and fathers from the Nepalese and South station communities that they're reaching out to, Lord, we pray that they would experience your favor and your blessing.

[3 : 44] And many people will come to know you through that ministry. Please, would you open up the hearts of the dads there who often prevent their families from coming to church and coming to faith?

Would you show them mercy? And even as they struggle with funding, would you provide for them with the resources they need so they can carry on that ministry? Father, we also want to pray in this city for the different faith groups that there are here.

We want to pray for the Jewish community that meets up in Robinson Road. We want to pray for the Muslim community across this city. We want to pray for the Hindu community and the Buddhist community. Father, you've shown us that you are the only way, that Jesus is the only way to reach you.

And yet there are many who are desperately seeking you in this city. Would you show yourself to them? Would you reveal yourself to them? Would you make us a people who are willing to go out of our comfort zones and the church in Hong Kong, a church that is willing to go out beyond the four walls to reach out to people that they might find you as they seek you, Lord?

Lord, you're a God who saves. So we ask that you would save many people in this city through your beautiful, glorious name. Amen.

[5 : 03] Let me invite Echo and Grace to come and read to us. The scripture reading comes from Daniel chapter 9.

Please follow along in your bulletins or on the screen. In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, by descent Amid, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans.

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, 70 years.

Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleased for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession, saying, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments.

We have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. We have not listened to your servants, the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

[6 : 27] To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you.

To us, O Lord, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants, the prophets.

All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice, and the curse and oath that are written in the law of Moses, the servant of God.

Have been poured out upon us because we have sinned against him. He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us, and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity.

For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us, yet we have not entreated the favor of the Lord our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by his truth.

[8 : 01] 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.

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.

O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers.

Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us. Now, therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate.

O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy.

[9 : 14] O Lord, hear. O Lord, 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.

While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the Lord my God for the holy hill of my God, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight. At the time of the evening sacrifice, he made me understand, speaking with me and saying, O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding.

At the beginning of your pleas for mercy, a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved. Therefore, consider the word and understand the vision.

This is the word of God. Amen. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Chris.

[10:25] I'm one of the leaders here. We've been going through this series on prayer. We've been looking at the Sermon on the Mount, and then we've paused for three or four weeks just to really go deeper into this issue of prayer and what it means to be a praying church.

Because I don't know if around you, but as you look around at the world, I mean, this week has just been a very interesting week, even on the news. We've had Brexit has been postponed.

We've had the leaders of the Occupy Central movement found guilty and facing jail sentences.

We've had calls to boycott Brunei-run hotels because of introducing Sharia law.

Everywhere we look around, there is segregation. There is division. It just shows us that we live in a world where we desperately want harmony.

We desperately want peace. We desperately want to be able to be together. But there's something that is wrong. There isn't harmony. There isn't peace. And as we look today at this prayer of Daniel, we're going to see, and this is an incredible prayer, we're going to see that Daniel is going to show us something about what it means to be a people who intercede, who pray in the midst of a broken situation.

[11:48] And just by way of background, Daniel is an old man. This is written a few hundred years before Christ.

He's been in exile in Babylon with many of his Jewish companions for over 50 years. The last time he saw his homeland in Jerusalem, it was burning and being destroyed by the Babylonians themselves.

And as we looked at last week with Nehemiah, who was also in this foreign land, this Daniel had been faithful to God throughout the whole of his life.

He'd been so faithful, he'd even been willing to be thrown to the lions rather than disown his God. Every day he spent time with his God in prayer and reading the Scriptures for the last 40 years, 50 years, maybe longer.

And you know, no one has a strong relationship with God who goes through the trials of life unless they are a person of God's Word and a person of prayer. But one day, Daniel is doing his Bible reading plan.

[13:03] And he gets to the book of Jeremiah, chapter 25. Do you know people in the Bible read the Bible, right? Did you know that? So he reads this bit of Jeremiah, which was written just like 70 odd years before.

And he realizes something. He realizes that God had been speaking through Jeremiah, saying that the end of this mess that the Jewish people were in is going to come.

The end of this exile in Babylon is going to come. And it's going to last only 70 years in total. And so Daniel goes and looks at the calendar and he says, whoa, 70 years is almost up.

So God is going to deliver his people. God is going to restore. God's going to do something. His sovereign plan, he's promised he's going to rescue us.

And so what does Daniel do? Does he kind of sit back, watch TV and go, hey, let's just wait for God to turn up? No, he doesn't. He says, then I turned my face to the Lord.

[14:13] Literally, I gave my face to the Lord, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. You see, Daniel's not just kind of giving thanks.

God, thank you that you're faithful. And let's just see what happens. No, he sees that when God brings his word, that is also a call for action from him. And he's on his knees in urgent petition and prayer for God to do what God has said that he will do.

He's requesting God to restore. Do you know when you read a promise in the Bible, it's actually meant to lead you to pray that God would bring that promise to bear. But I don't know if you've wondered actually how strange that is.

Because if God is sovereignly going to work out his plan, why do you need to pray? He's going to do it anyway. Right? And don't we often feel like that?

Things just going to happen regardless of whether I pray or not. So, I mean, it doesn't really make much difference. But the thing is, Daniel knows that God is sovereign, which means he will work out his purposes.

[15:22] And there will some things that he will do regardless of whether I pray about them or not. He's going to bring the sun up tomorrow, probably regardless of whether I pray about it or not. I'm going to die regardless of whether I pray about it or not.

There are some things he calls people like Abraham regardless of whether people have prayed about Abraham coming or not. Because he's sovereign. He works out his plans and purposes. But there are also some things that God will only do in response to the prayers of his people. That's the way he has chosen to work.

And so, Daniel knows that a few hundred years before this time, that Solomon had dedicated the temple in Jerusalem.

And he'd also prayed a prayer where he said, God, he predicted that God's people would be taken into exile. And he says, if they hear and if they turn from their sin and from their wicked ways, and if they say we have sinned and we've acted wickedly, then God will hear from heaven and he will forgive their sin and he will heal and he will restore them.

[16:36] And Daniel knows that the healing of God's people only comes when God's people get on their knees and they pray. Do you know, there are things God wants to bless this church with.

There are things that God wants to bless your life with. There are things that God wants to bless your family with. There are things that God wants to bless this city with that he will only do when we get on our knees and we pray and we repent and we turn to him.

Do you know that? One person knows that. You see, James 4 says, you do not have because you do not ask. Meaning that there are some things you won't get until you ask for them.

And so we must pray, which is what we looked at two weeks ago. But last week, we also saw that we need to have a conviction of who we're praying to.

Do you notice that Daniel doesn't start his little prayer going, hey mate, I'm just kind of needing a little bit of help down here. He goes and he says, just like Nehemiah, it's almost word for word what Nehemiah said last week.

[17:48] He says, I pray to Yahweh, my God, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commands.

You see, Steve, who preached last week, he mentioned the way that God is this great and awesome God, and that changes the way we pray.

I was so blessed by the sermon last week from Steve. It just opens our eyes. But you know, I never use the word awesome for anything other than what I see God doing, what I see who God is.

Do you know why I don't? The reason I don't is because the word awesome means it causes awe, it causes trembling and fear. But we live in a culture which is starved of awe.

You know, we delight in YouTube mediocrity. And so we have cheapened the word awesome to go things like, that selfie is awesome. That burger is awesome.

[18:56] Now, I don't know the last time you got down trembling in fear before McDonald's, Big Mac. But you see, we've cheapened the word, right?

But here's what is awesome. Do you know this last week, astronomers discovered they just took a picture of a black hole that is 40 billion kilometers across.

It's bigger than the size of our solar system. And it's 500 million trillion kilometers away. I can't count that high.

And then it says in scripture that God is the one who stretches out the heavens, stretches out space like a tent. He takes tent pegs and knocks them in one side, knocks them in the other side.

And in between is hundreds of hundreds of millions of trillions of kilometers. I can't get my head around that. That is who God is. He is great and he is awesome.

[19:57] And in prayer, why Daniel wants us to start with this is because we're so consumed with ourselves that we lose perspective on life and we get wrapped up in the trivial.

You know, John Piper said this, The healing of the soul begins by restoring the glory of God to its flaming, all-attracting place at the center.

We are all starved for the glory of God, not for self. No one goes to the Grand Canyon to increase self-esteem. Because there is greater healing for the soul in beholding splendor than there is in beholding yourself.

Do you see what he's saying? He's saying when we come in prayer, if you see who God really is, that is going to bring a totally new perspective to your life.

And we see the glory of God. We see in the light of who he is and what he's done. And then we begin to pray like Daniel begins to pray. And he begins to intercede for his people.

[21 : 05] Do you see? We need to pray. We need to see who we're praying to. But now I've got three things that I want us to just flesh out from this prayer. And the first is Daniel identifies with the sinful.

This is, I find this very challenging, this part. He says, He says, We have sinned. We have done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. He then says later on, We've not listened to the prophets. He says, We've not obeyed the voice of our God. He says, We've not entreated the favor of the Lord our God. Now it's very interesting he uses the word we.

Because we've already said that Daniel is a pretty righteous guy. In fact, in the whole of scripture, other than Jesus, Daniel is pretty much the only guy who doesn't have much on him.

And so, why does he say, Daniel, the best of the best, why does he say, We have sinned?

[22 : 08] Because he's actually talking about the rest of the generation before who didn't listen to what God wanted to say through Jeremiah and other people. It wasn't him.

It was everybody else. So why does he say, We? Because he sees this broken down city of Jerusalem out there in front of him.

And he knows that he is part of this people, this generation that is under God's judgment because of sin. And this is his people. He belongs to them.

He's not just an individual by himself. Now I think we struggle with this because we're actually a pretty individual kind of lot. I'm from a western country.

We breathe individualism. You know, but actually I think we understand the idea of being collective. You know, if you work for a well-known successful company, for example, like Apple or Google or Morgan Stanley, you're very happy to introduce yourself and say, Hi, I work for Apple.

[23 : 15] You see, you're very happy that their success helps you to feel like you can live in their success, right? You want to be associated. You want to be identified with them because that kind of gives you a little bit of glory, right?

Even if you actually haven't really contributed anything to the company, right? But when something goes wrong, don't we all normally then start pointing the finger and start saying, Well, it wasn't me. It was them. It was the bosses. It was the corporate culture. It's everybody else. It's not me, right? We're collective and corporate when it suits us, and then we're individual when it suits us, right? And the reason we often fail to pray is for many things that God calls us to is because actually we think, this isn't my problem. This is their problem.

Daniel is not going. It wasn't me, as he looks at all the mess around him. Neither. He's not actually here. He's not repenting instead of the people.

[24 : 27] It's not like, God will forgive me because my wife prayed that I would be forgiven so I don't really need to repent. It's not that. But he's saying, this mess that we're in is us.

It's not just them. Now, what does this mean for us? Because this is challenging. C.S. Lewis wrote a really great little book called The Trouble with X Is.

You can get a hold of it. It's quite fun. He says, don't we all in our lives have someone that we can all see their flaws? Everyone can see that that person has an issue.

Okay? And we say things like, the problem with X is they just talk too much. Or the problem with X is he's just insensitive. Or he's just defensive.

Or don't we? Or he's just a gossip. We say it all the time. And the thing is, you may even try and talk to that person about their thing, and they just don't see it.

[25 : 29] They're just blind to it. You can say it a hundred times, they don't get it. And so what we do is the only person in the room who doesn't understand that X has a problem is themselves.

Right? Anyone know what I'm talking about? You do this with your spouse, you do this with your colleagues, you do this with everybody else. But then he says, as we look at this, what we do is we complain about those people and we segregate ourselves from other people.

Because we don't actually want to be around those people that we see all these big problems with. And so we divide ourselves off. I read on internet forums about Western expats who say things like, the problem with Hong Kongers is they just have no social awareness when they're walking. And then I read Hong Kong forums and they say the problem with mainlanders is they're just rude. And then I read mainland forums and they say the problem with Westerners is they're just arrogant and think they can tell everyone else what to do.

Everyone else is the problem is. Right? And then what we do is we bring that down into the church. And I look at another church and I say, well the problem is they just don't teach the Bible properly. [26 : 40] And then the problem is, someone else will say, the problem is they just are not filled with the spirit enough. And then someone else will say, the problem is they just don't reach out enough. And then if you don't want to, if you want to go even a bit lower into our CGs, you go then, the problem with that person in my CG is they're just not committed enough.

And then you go to the problem with that person is they're just a gossip. And then if you put all of this ingredients in together, every person in every CG, in every workplace, in every family, in every city, in every part of the world, thinks that everybody else is the problem.

Have you noticed that? Which is why we're so divided in so many ways. But C.S. Lewis says, you know, the real challenge of this is do you know that you are somebody's ex?

The problem with Chris is that he's just thoughtless at times. The problem with Chris is he just doesn't say what he thinks at times.

The problem, do you see? This is what Daniel is going. Daniel, a person more than anyone else in the whole of God's people who could pray like the Pharisee, I thank God that I'm not like other men, especially like that tax collector over there.

[28 : 01] He doesn't say that. He says, we have sinned. We have rebelled. We. He identifies himself as a fellow sinner with everybody else.

He's not minimizing the real sins and flaws of everyone else, but he's just being honest. He's saying this is us, not just this is them. Does that make sense? This is actually really profoundly affected the way I pray.

I was on the MTR. Everyone was rushing off the MTR like we do in Hong Kong. And one lady decided halfway along that she wanted to turn left when everyone else was going straight ahead. And so a guy in front just bumped into her and as he was trying to get his way, the lady turned around and said, are you crazy? The guy kind of started walking off going, don't you know the exit's that way?

And so everyone was feeling kind of like angry. And normally I'd be judging them for being so impatient. But as I'd been thinking about this, I stopped and I thought, God, forgive us that we live in a city where we are so impatient that actually we only care for getting our own way.

[29 : 22] And I know that even though I might not react exactly the same, I know that same root of impatience is in my heart too. It just comes out in different ways.

And but for the grace of God, but for a different education system, but for my parents, that would be me. So let me ask you, when you see, when you see issues in the church, when you see issues in the church, often I find people come up to me and they'll say things like, the church isn't doing this. Or the church isn't doing this properly. And it's great to hear people spotting issues. issues. But I wonder, before you ever complain, do you ever go, Father, not the church is like this, but we are like this.

This is us. We are maybe too living for our comfort. We need to change. We need you to work in our lives. Forgive us.

us. Because that is what God says. We are his people. And Daniel is saying that when he sees Jerusalem broken down, and when you see the brokenness around you, when you see sin around you, when you see the things which make you just want to go, ah, I can't stand that.

[30 : 56] That is a window for you to stop and reflect and to go, instead of going, I can't believe people are like that, to actually go, I'm part of this culture.

I'm part of this church. I'm part of this family. My heart is capable of the same things. Forgive me. Forgive us.

And when you do that, do you know what happens? In your heart, your heart begins to melt. And you begin to break down those segregating walls between us because we see that we are all broken sinners in need of a savior to show us mercy and grace, to restore the broken areas of our

lives just like the walls of Jerusalem.

The problem with X is sin, which is also a problem with me. And that is devastating for your pride. It's devastating for your self-righteousness, which is all at the root of all the division, all the animosity in our society, in our world.

[32 : 03] So we pray, we identify ourselves with others and their sin. That's a hard thing to get for us, I think, because we're so individual.

But then I want to move on. We identify with the sin in our world, but then we move on to talk about the righteous God. Because if we left it just there, we'd feel kind of like on a big downer.

But there's two things we need to see here. What Daniel admits is that there is this massive gap between a holy, awesome God and a people who are wicked and rebellious in everything that we do.

Which is why throughout this passage, do you notice, what's the repeated character trait that God talks about here? Does anyone know? He repeats again and again about God's righteousness. You see that? He says, to you, O Lord, belong righteousness, but to us, open shame. He says, the Lord our God is righteous in the works he's done. He says, O Lord, according to your righteous acts.

[33 : 14] Do you know what? The word righteous doesn't mean just a kind of morally good person. The word righteous means you act rightly in relationship. So, all relationships are not the same, though.

So, for example, if you are a parent and you act righteously towards your children, you might snuggle up to them at night and read them bedtime stories. That's being righteous with your children, acting rightly.

If you are an employer or a boss and you snuggle up and start reading bedtime stories to your employees, that probably isn't being righteous.

being righteous is there treating your colleagues fairly, giving them good job descriptions, clear guidelines, creating a culture where people can flourish and grow.

That is a righteous boss. If you are a righteous judge and a triad goes and steals somebody's car, the righteous judge doesn't say, well, it doesn't matter, it's fine, it's only a car.

[34 : 19] No, no, a righteous judge will punish fairly and rightly because that is what is righteous. It's the right thing to do. When it says that God is righteous, it means that he has always done what is right according to his character, according to his promises.

It says, God is a righteous judge and you and I deserve to be in a mess because of what we're like. That's why he says God should punish us.

He's righteous. He punishes us for our wickedness. All of us. He should leave us like the city of Jerusalem in a broken mess.

You know, some people say, why can God not just forgive people? You know, like a good father will forgive like their children when they're a bit wayward. But they don't realize that God is a righteous father who longs to bring justice and love and forgiveness and mercy and restoring his children. But he's also a righteous judge who must punish wickedness and injustice. And how do you get those two together?

[35 : 31] The end of the passage, which we actually didn't read, tells that actually an angel comes to Daniel and says, I've heard your prayer. I've heard what you're saying. And I will show mercy.

I will listen to your prayer. But there's only going to be full restoration for this sinful people when a Messiah comes. When someone who is more righteous even than you, Daniel, is going to come. We need a greater Daniel for us. You know, in the book of Ezekiel it says, I looked for a man to stand in the gap before me in the land that I shouldn't destroy it.

God is looking for someone who is totally righteous. So that he can represent the rest of us. But he found none. And so then, 500 years later, John the Baptist comes.

And he's preaching. And he's calling people to repent and he's baptizing them. And so somebody comes along, they confess their sin and he baptizes them. Next person comes along and they confess all the stuff, all the wickedness they've done and he baptizes them.

[36 : 37] And he looks around and the next person who comes there and he sees it's Jesus. And he goes, you're not supposed to be getting baptized because you are not a sinner. Like, I should be baptizing you.

And Jesus says, I've come, I need to be baptized to fulfill all righteousness. To fulfill the fact that God is a righteous father who wants to restore us into relationship with himself but he's also a righteous judge and I'm going to be that person who's going to make it so that my mercy can come upon you.

You know, this is a little tricky for us to understand sometimes but I heard a story about a medical student. I know we've got a lot of medical students here. A medical student who was researching into sexually transmitted diseases, STDs.

And so he went down to the hospital to try and find a particular doctor and as he goes down there to this doctor, to find the doctor, he sees the long line of all the patients there who were suffering from the STDs.

It was kind of like the line of shame. And as he looked over there he saw the nurse and he said to the nurse, hey, I'm wanting to find the doctor. And she just said to him, yeah, yeah, just get in the line.

[37 : 50] And he said, no, no, no, you don't understand. I'm a student. I'm a student here. And she said, that's fine. Just get in the line. And he said, no, no, no, you don't understand. I'm a student. I'm researching kind of STDs.

I'd love you to just kind of help me to get to see the doctor. And she says, like, everyone's got their story. Just get in the line. And as he's standing there in the line, then his classmate walks past, looks at him, and is kind of shocked and kind of walks on very quickly.

A few minutes later, one of his professors walks past, sees him there in the line, and carries on. You see, when Jesus, at the heart of the gospel message, is a great and awesome God who came down to identify with us and to stand in the line, though he was righteous and he had no sin, he got in the line for you and for me, though we are rebelled, though we are wicked, though we are sinful. He was at his baptism, he got in the line for you and for me. At Calvary, when he went to the cross, he identified, not just with your success to kind of get the glory, but he identified with our shame and our sin for you and for me.

He had every right to say, it wasn't me, it was them. But he didn't. And he didn't just identify with us, he took the righteous judgment of God upon himself, so he took your place in the line, so you didn't have to be in the line, so that you could actually experience the righteous Father's mercy, love, and grace to restore you to himself.

[39 : 55] No matter what you've done, he bridged the gap between us and God. He was the one who was shamed so that you never have to be in his eyes.

No matter what you've done, his grace is there and it's the only way for God to be truly righteous. You know, Romans says, who is to condemn us?

Jesus Christ is the one who died, more than that who was raised, who is at the right hand of God interceding for us. Do you know what that means?

That means when you see all the stuff that I have done, when you see all the stuff that everyone else has done, it means that we have somebody who has done what it takes for us to be restored so that we don't have to face God's judgment.

Doesn't have to face our judgment of others either. And because Jesus stood in the line and identified with us, it means you are not beyond God's redemptive restoring power.

[40 : 58] Because he stood in the line, your family is not beyond the redemptive restoring power of God. Because he stood in the line and identified with us, it means that your workplace is not beyond the redemptive restoring power of God.

This city is not beyond his redemptive power, because Jesus stood in the line so that we don't have to live in that mess.

He's able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. He is always pleading with our Father for mercy for us because he has died.

Now how does that change the way you pray? pray? It changes the way we pray. It transforms our prayer when we realize that though we should be under God's judgment, we are no longer, because it humbles us to own the sin of our church as ours, to own the sins of our city as ours, because we live in this culture, we're part of this culture.

Culture is not formed by just general people, it's formed by individuals like you and me. But it also changes us to plead for God's mercy, but also to pray for God's favor upon those that we would never normally pray for, upon those who all you can see in their life is their brokenness.

[42 : 38] Here's what verse 17 says. It says, Do you know what?

The sanctuary is the temple of God, the place where the presence of God was to dwell. And Daniel is asking that God, like in the language of the book of Numbers, that God's face would shine upon this place and restore.

How does your face shine? Unless you put lotion on, you know. You know, your face shines when you smile.

Your face shines when you smile. And so what Daniel is asking for is for God to replace the brokenness around us with a God's own smiling presence, the beaming radiance of an awesome, glorious, sovereign God who wants to restore sinful, broken people like you and like me and like people around us.

No matter what you've done, no matter how far away, he wants to call you back because when God smiles, restoration comes.

[43 : 59] Do you know, you can have a terrible day and then someone you love, you meet them and they just smile at you and your day is fine. It just brings healing.

When God smiles, he restores us. And when because of Christ we turn back to him, no matter where we've been, you will experience his smile upon you, radiating, showing his favor and his love upon you.

I don't know if you really realize how much God smiles upon you as his child. Most of us think he's just the righteous judge. We don't see that because of Christ he's the righteous father who wants to smile upon you.

He wants to call you back to himself. But here's what this does and I'm going to close with this.

When you see that God smiles upon you in spite of the fact that you belong to a whole group of people who are messed up and broken and you can see it every day because you see it in everybody else and then you can see that in yourself but you see that he is gracious to you.

What that means is you will then begin to pray and intercede for the people that annoy you and you dislike the most. For the people around you that all you can see is the problem is with them.

[45 : 31] I've shared this before but I had a boss who I hated like really hated. She would hire and fire people without any concern for them at all.

She was the kind of person she would lie to us. She didn't pay us for a couple of months. She tried to cheat us out of wages. She embezzled a whole year's funds so none of us could get a pay increase.

All the prophets went. I loved her greatly. No I didn't. And if you would ask me the problem with her is I would have given you a list about as long from this ceiling down to here.

And it was justified totally. my heart was so hard though towards her because it didn't even cross my mind to pray for her.

Why would I pray for someone like that? And then one day God convicted me. He said you know when you pray you pray that even though you know that you're a sinner you pray that God would shine his smile upon you that you would experience his grace and his mercy in your own life.

[46 : 51] That you would know his presence in your own life. And you know what you do experience that. But you don't want that for anybody else. Because actually you are more like her than you realize.

Because you're actually totally self-centered. It's all about you. And at that point I actually got on my knees and started repenting.

I asked God to change my heart. And what happened was I then began to pray for her. I began to pray that God's smile would shine upon her and restore the brokenness in her life.

I asked that God's presence would come to her. I repented of my own self-centeredness that I saw reflected in her. And you know what happens?

what happens is that my heart begins to change. You know someone said there's a difference between someone who intercedes for someone and someone who prays for someone.

[47 : 58] Someone who prays for someone they just pray. Someone who intercedes is willing to be part of the answer to their prayer. And so what God did in me he actually showed me I need to go and bless her.

I need to actually go and be a demonstration of God's smile in her life. And so I'd go and it was Easter I went and bought her Easter X. Before I would avoid her.

But actually from that I would be asking how are you doing? I'd be trying to reach out to her. I couldn't do that in my strength. That is only what the grace of God can do in your heart. I began to be more gracious, more patient. patient. Some of us, we make the excuse I'm not good at praying.

Some of us say I don't have time to pray. But all of us have the time to complain. All of us have the time to say the problem with X is, in fact, we spend a lot of time doing that, mentally and verbally. [49 : 04] And so God wants every time you start doing that, you start seeing yourself, that is God wanting to tap you on the shoulder to say, first of all, do you see actually the problem with X is a problem that's reflected in me?

Father, would you forgive me? Would you forgive us that we're people who are actually selfish and self-centered? It's then God tapping you on the shoulder.

To say, would you now, being someone who has received grace, be someone who can be an instrument to pray that God's smiling presence would come upon this church, upon this city, upon your workplace, upon whoever it is?

Because that, in a world which is broken and divided and segregated, is power to change this culture, to bring revival in your heart and to be a different kind of people, all because Christ got in the line for us.

We can know him as our righteous, gracious father. God bless you who would call him the song in company or God.

[50 : 23] We can know him as if we have until people have competed over the plans when husband comes to oblivion.