**OUR COVENANT-KEEPING GOD**

**(Daniel 9:1-27)**

 I try not to be a grammar Nazi. I try not to come down on people when they use words that are not grammatically correct, but there are some words that when I hear them, it is like fingernails on a chalk board.

 For instance, if I thank someone in a text, and they text back, “Your welcome,” it is all I can do to refrain from correcting them. That “your” needs an apostrophe, r-e after the “you.” The correct response is “you’re welcome,” not “your welcome.”

 If I hear someone say the word “irregardless,” I cringe because that is not a word. It is simply “regardless.” There are a thousand other examples.

 When I was in college, I took a course in theology. A number of times, the professor used the phrase, “do theology.” I never quite understand that phrase. You can read theology, study theology, debate theology, and teach theology, but I don’t know what it means to “do theology.”

 In our time together this evening, I want to help us do something that can be properly termed as “doing,” but it is something we rarely do during the preaching time of a worship service. It is my hope, prayer, and intent that tonight we will “do Scripture.”

 During Sunday School we study Scripture. We discuss Scripture. We teach Scripture, and hopefully we learn Scripture. During the worship time, I read Scripture, and you hear Scripture. I preach Scripture and explain Scripture.

 Hopefully, we set aside time to memorize Scripture and meditate on Scripture.

 I am afraid that we don’t do Scripture nearly enough. It could be rightfully said of us that we are hearers of the word but not doers of the word.

 As we work our way through tonight’s passage, I want us to find some ways to “do the word.”

 Our text is Daniel 9. The last section of Daniel 9 has been much discussed and much debated through the years. Unfortunately, the verses that precede the last section has been much ignored. That is unfortunate because we never would have gotten the last section (vv. 20-27) had it not been for what is described in vv. 1-19.

 Before we attempt to do any Scripture, let me lay out some things. There are 12 chapters in Daniel, and there is one thing in particular that makes chapter 9 different from all the other chapters. Oddly, chapter 9 is the only chapter in Daniel that contains God’s covenant name.

 In Exodus 3, God introduced Himself to Moses, and He shared with Moses His personal name. It consists of four consonants YHWH. It is usually pronounced “Yahweh.” The truth is, we don’t know exactly how to pronounce it because the Jews so revered the name of God, they would never say it aloud. In the Hebrew bible, the name is used 6828 times.

 The editors of your Bible do something interesting and helpful. Instead of printing the four letters each time God’s name shows up, they print the word LORD in small caps. When you find LORD in small caps you know that is God’s person name, His covenant name.

 In the Book of Daniel, you will only find LORD in small caps in the 9th chapter.

 There is another Hebrew name for God that we translate as Lord with a capital “L” only. It is the name *Adonai.* Sometimes Adonai and YHWY are used together. In that case, instead of rendering the translation, “Lord LORD,” we read, “Lord GOD.”

 Daniel is telling us in chapter 9 that these are the things that God’s people alone need to know and do (9:4).

 Notice what Daniel is doing as this chapter opens. Look at v. 2. He is reading God’s word. Daniel didn’t have a Bible like we do. We don’t know how much of the OT he had, but he did have the roll of Jeremiah which would have been completed sometime after Daniel’s captivity began.

 As Daniel read the scroll of Jeremiah, he saw something that gave him hope. What he read was most definitely Jeremiah 25:11-12. Why would this passage give Daniel such hope? Can you point to a verse that gives you hope?

 What did Daniel do with that verse? He used it as His motivation to pray. He had found a promise in the word of God, and he, essentially, asked God to fulfill His promise.

 Daniel knew the 70 years would soon be up; so, He confidently asked God to forgive His people and restore them to their land.

 Let’s look at a few Bible truths and promises and pray them back to God. What is a promise God has given you? . . . Let’s pray that promise back to God?

 Look at Romans 8:16-17, 29, 37, 38-39. Let’s pray these promises back to our Heavenly Father.

1. **OUR COVENANT-KEEPING GOD HEARS US WHEN WE PRAY; SO, LET’S PRAY.**

 Basically, Daniel, did three things in his praying. **First, He identified with his people and confessed their sin.** At least 15 times, Daniel used the word “we” (vv. 5-11, 13-15).

 Our job is not just to read Scripture; let’s do Scripture. Let’s confess our sin to the Lord: personal sin . . . the sin of our family . . . the sin of our church . . . and our nation.

 **Second, Daniel acknowledged that it was because of sin that judgment had fallen on God’s people.** Look at 9:11. This was Israel’s own 9/11. Let’s see what Moses said would happen if God’s people disobeyed the covenant (Deut. 28:15, 25, 36-37, 46-52, 64-65).

 What are some of the judgments that have come upon our country for our disobedience to God?

 **Third, Daniel asked for God’s mercy.** Look at 9:16-19. We need to ask for God to forgive and restore us. As we do that, we will be doing Scripture.

 It was in January of 1996 that Pastor Joe Wright was asked to open the new session of the Kansas Senate. Most were expecting the usual innocuous, vague generalities that they usually heard. That is not what they got. Rev. Wright’s prayed a prayer lasted a little over 60 seconds, but when it was over, one senator walked out in protest. Several Democrats went to the microphone to express their outrage. “He can’t talk to us like that!” “He doesn’t know what he’s talking about.” What did the good pastor say?

 I want you to bow your heads, and I will pray to God the prayer that Joe Wright prayed:

 Heavenly Father, we come before You today to ask Your forgiveness and to seek Your direction and guidance. Your Word says, “Woe to those who call evil good” but that is exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values.

* We confess that we have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word and called it Pluralism;
* We have endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle;
* We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery;
* We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare;
* We have killed our unborn and called it choice;
* We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable;
* We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem;
* We have abused power and called it politics;
* We have coveted our neighbor’s possessions and called it ambition;
* We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression;
* We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment.

 Search us, Oh, God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. We ask it in the name of Your Son, the living Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

 We need more Rev. Joe Wright’s in our country who will dare to be a Daniel and who will tell it like it is. Speaking truth to power, however, also involves speaking the truth about our country and ourselves to the one, true Power who can cleanse us and restore us.

1. **OUR COVENANT-KEEPING GOD ANSWERS OUR PRAYER; SO, LET’S WATCH.**

 Henry Blackaby, the author of *Experiencing God* said that after we pray, the first thing we must do is watch and see what happens because what happens next is God’s way of speaking to us.

 Daniel prayed, and then he watched God do something amazing. Look at vv. 20-23. God had given Jeremiah a revelation about 70 years signifying when the Jews would return to their homeland. God gave Daniel a revelation about 70 weeks signifying when the Messiah would come.

 Look at the end of v. 21. The words “the time of the evening sacrifice” are surprising. There hadn’t been an evening sacrifice for decades. The Temple no longer existed. Daniel hadn’t been in Jerusalem since he was just a boy and now, he was in his 80’s. The things of God were so ingrained in Daniel that he still thought about them and kept time by them after all those years.

 An angel may not come to you to give you understanding, but we have Someone better. We have the Holy Spirit who is our Teacher.

 We aren’t going to cover every verse and answer every question. Books with different interpretation have written about these verses. Let me give you a few thoughts.

 Look at v. 24. Literally the text says, “Seventy 7’s.” It doesn’t really say *weeks.* *Weeks* is the generally agreed way to view it, and most say that each week symbolizes seven years rather than days. If a week is seven years, how long would 70 weeks be? It would be 490 years.

 What is going to happen in 490 years? Look at v. 24.

 The 70 weeks are divided between 7 weeks, 62 weeks, and 1 week. That would be 49 years, 433 years, and 7 years.

 Some say that there is a great span of time separating the first 69 years from the last 7 years. Neither in Daniel nor anywhere else in Scripture is that expressly taught. I believe it was all fulfilled with the coming of Jesus.

 God is in control. Jesus did come, and He is coming again. We pray, and we watch.

 While I was in seminary, I had a professor who told story about a conversation he had with a man on an airplane. The man seated next to him was an observant Jew. He asked the man, “Do you still look for a Messiah?”

 The man answered, “Everyday, I look for Messiah. Everyday, I expect Messiah.”

 Are we looking? Are we expecting?

 I want us to close by doing one more Scripture. The last page of the Bible contains a promise and a prayer. Look at Revelation 22:20. Jesus promised to come quickly and John prayed, “Come, Lord Jesus.” Let’s pray that prayer aloud: “Come, Lord Jesus.” One more time: “Come, Lord Jesus.”

 We said that after we pray, the first thing we should do is watch to see what happens next. We prayed for Jesus to come. Now, it is time to watch what happens next.

 Jesus might not come tonight, or tomorrow, or this week, but He is going to come, and He may come sooner than we expect. We need to look for Him and expect Him. Until He comes, we need to be about the business of doing Scripture.