

Sometimes You Have To Kneel In Order To See!

<sup>15</sup> “Now, Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day, we have sinned, we have done wrong.

<sup>16</sup> Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. Our sins and the iniquities of our ancestors have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us.

<sup>17</sup> “Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary.

<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> 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.”

Sometimes you have move your body to see something. You are standing in a crowd. You may have to get on your tip-toes in order to see over the crowd. When you talk to a small child, it is best that you bend down or get on one knee so you are at their level instead of way up there. And sometimes we have to get down on our knees in order to see. That is the lesson we learn from Daniel today. Our text includes one of his prayers. We are not told if he got on his knees to pray or not. But whenever we pray to God, we are on knees, we are on our knees whether physically or figuratively, because prayer means we are humble before the Lord. When we are on our knees in prayer, we see things we did not see before. First we see our sins.

*I. We have to kneel to see our sins.*

When we think of Daniel, we think of the lion’s den. But that was not the only trouble he faced in his life. As a young teenager, probably thirteen or fifteen, he was dragged off into captivity by the Babylonians. Imagine being taken away from your family that early in life. In captivity he was pretty much a slave as they dictated what job he was going to work. Sure, he was trained to be a wiseman. That is pretty prestigious, but it had its own risks. Sometimes the king would execute all his wisemen if they didn’t tell him what he wanted to hear. While there he was told to sin against God by eating things that were contrary to God’s Old Testament laws, but he was able to convince his guard to give him proper food. His life was not easy.

Then God blessed him. God gave him the gift of knowledge and understanding so he went places, quickly rising through the ranks of the king’s wisemen. But this gift brought its own problems, namely the political intrigue and jealousy of the other wisemen. It was jealousy that led Daniel to being thrown into the lion’s den. Imagine the pressure and fear that goes along with all of that.

But worse than that, Daniel was tormented by what happened to Israel and to Jerusalem. It says in verse 12 of this chapter, **“Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem.”** History records for us the destruction of many buildings and cities, but nothing has ever happened in history like the destruction of Jerusalem. It was desolate. The temple was destroyed. The temple in Jerusalem was the one place on earth where God came to talk to his people. But God moved the Babylonians to destroy this temple because the people had adulterated themselves to other gods. It would be like the police department changing its 911 number to an unlisted number; God removed his presence from his rebellious people! It was their fault.

All of this drove Daniel to his knees in chapter nine. And while on his knees before God, Daniel saw things. He saw his sin and its consequences. He saw the destruction of Jerusalem as God’s judgment and not simply the result of an army’s invasion. . . . **we have sinned, we have done wrong.** Did you catch it? Daniel says *“our sins, we have done wrong.”* Daniel didn’t worship the Baals of the Canaanites like the others. Rather, he was loyal to God. He remained loyal through thick and thin. He was willing to be thrown into the lion’s den because he obeyed God rather than men. He refused to eat food from the king’s table which was sacrificed to idols. Daniel should have said, “their sins did this,” but he says “our sins did this.” Seventeen times in this chapter Daniel uses the first person to describe the sins which angered God and led him to destroy the temple: **“we have sinned and done wrong. . . . we rebelled and turned away from God’s commandments. . . . we are covered in shame. . . . all Israel became unfaithful. . . . we have sinned with our kings and fathers. . . . we have not obeyed or kept God’s commandments. . . . the curses of Moses are poured out on us. . . .”**

What a refreshing attitude we find in Daniel’s prayer! Yes, I say refreshing because this world and our generation think little of sin and its consequences. Sin is no longer a terrible thing; people even boast about their sins. But Daniel, and prayerfully, all of us, recognize sin for what it is.

We learn from Daniel’s prayer that there are two kinds of sinners in this world: the heinous sinner and the heinous sinner. Both are “sinners” and both are equally worthy of God’s anger. We may not outwardly commit the sins that others commit. Maybe we didn’t murder someone or whatever, but he who hates his brother is a murderer. So there is the murderer and there is, well, the murderer even if only in his heart. It is like a group of construction workers all standing before a recently constructed house. Each

one--the carpenter, the roofer, the mason, the architect, the project manager--can say, "Look at what I have done," because each contributed to the work. Now in a negative way, we all have sinned and contributed to the destruction of this world and God's anger. We all had a nail to pound in or a shingle or brick to lay. Look at the house of iniquity the world sinners raise before God, including us?

So, Daniel fell to his knees before God. There he saw his sins. He saw he was no better than the rest. But from our knees we see more than our sins. We also see God's loving mercy.

## *II. On our knees we see God's loving mercy.*

Daniel confesses in his prayer, **We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy.** Daniel asks for mercy from God. Note very carefully how he bases that mercy on God alone, and not on himself or what he has done. It has to come from God's mercy alone. Compare the following two kids. A teenage girl breaks a window in your house. You know her. She babysits your kids, and when she does, she always does the dishes and straightens up the house. She always rings the doorbell when she comes. She speaks to you with respect. She always treats your property with respect. She is a nice girl. So you forgive her. You tell her to forget about the window.

But if that window was broken by the boy next door, it is a different story. He always zooms his bike through your flower garden. He is disrespectful, constantly shoots off fireworks late at night, and speaks foul language in front of your children, and has already hit your house twice with a golf ball. You will make him pay for the window. What's the difference between the girl and the boy? You forgive the nice girl, but not the snotty, mean kid. Your mercy does not come from within you but is based on things outside of you, for example, if the kid is nice to you or not.

If God based his mercy outside of himself, that is, on us, where does that leave us? There is no one righteous in his sight, not one. So, we deserve nothing good from God. Our actions, our lack of righteousness, demands punishment. Thank God his mercy comes from himself. He forgives us based not on who we are, but on his love alone. And, you see, that is why God will knock us to our knees. From your knees you see your sins, but you will also see God's mercy. Daniel did. <sup>19</sup> **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."**

Look at the cross from your knees. What do you see? You see God's Son hanging on the tree of the cross. He is suffering more than any human ever had or will. He is bearing the guilt and punishment of sinners. When you see him, you are seeing yourself. He is being you at that very moment, in fact every sinner. He suffers hell itself, that ultimate punishment for sin. Then he says it is done and commits his soul into God's hands and dies. Stay there. You also see the open tomb and empty grave. He is risen to life. And you will see your own resurrection. And what is it you hear? The Lord forgives you, not for your sake, but for the sake of Jesus Christ.

You see a lot from your knees. In fact, God will often force us down on our knees to see things we normally don't see. The problems you face, the illnesses, the burdens, the afflictions, all of which weigh you down are not punishments from God. Let me repeat that again. **THEY ARE NOT PUNISHMENTS FROM GOD!** The hardships that the believer faces are not punishments because these sins have been punished already by Christ. He was sacrificed once for the sins of the whole world. God punished Jesus, so he is not punishing you.

But they will serve us. Let me read to you from Hebrews 11, **"Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons."** I think of both Job and Daniel. Both men were God-fearing. Both were exemplary Christians. Yet, God didn't say, "Well, they are good enough so I don't have to pay any attention to them." God doesn't just discipline the weak Christian, but all Christians. He used the troubles in their lives to strengthen an already strong faith.

Fellow Christians. We need to learn how to kneel. I am not saying that you have to kneel for your evening prayers, though that may not be a bad idea. But we need to kneel in another sense before God. There he calls us to repentance and to faith in him. There God picks us up, stands us beside himself, brushes us off, and leads us to Christ's open tomb. Without kneeling before him, we cannot and will never understand our suffering, his love, and our forgiveness. So, Christians, kneel before your Lord and Savior. INJ Amen.