

165 The Gift of Kneeling

We know that the gift of healing is one of the "gifts of the Spirit", but this week we consider a rhyming gift not on any of the scriptural gift-lists, but in its way just as much a gift - the "gift of kneeling".

It must be said at the start that our physical posture in prayer or worship is not at the top of any "crucial, right-or-wrong" league of our spiritual habits. When all is said and done, our heavenly Father of course sees past our posture to our hearts and wills whenever we approach Him through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Yet our posture does play a part. Singly or together, in prayer or worship, we tend to stand sometimes, or sit, or kneel, or perhaps lie flat. All these postures can be found within Scripture, and each has its own time and emphasis, but prayer and kneeling have a long history of going together.

Kneeling is a deliberate act of the will, and can require "a bit of an effort" especially with the passing of the years! After a little experimenting at home, kneeling is also a comfortable posture that can be maintained for a long time.

It is a posture of humility and surrender, both physically and spiritually; when we are kneeling it is much easier for us to be humble than proud. In public, kneeling is a visible demonstration of prayer - easy to do when others also are kneeling, but possibly more difficult in, say, a barrack room, school assembly or even your place of worship if kneeling is not the norm. The habit of kneeling, simply because it leads on into prayer, also helps us in our "crossing of the threshold" consciously into God's presence, a crossing which we can so easily keep putting off "because I can't spare the time right now" (see TWR 94 on www.fsmins.org, on the Prayer and Devotions page, for more on this).

At the dedication of the Temple, (II Chronicles 6.13 and I Kings 8.54, 66), King Solomon "kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven". What a sight! What an example to the people and what a difference that example made to them. We read (verse 66) that after a massive fourteen-day feast, the people "blessed the king, and went away unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people". We are surprised they could even walk after such a time of it! The king had knelt before the Lord in prayer and worship in the sight of the people.

When Daniel learned of the foolish decree signed by King Darius (Daniel Chapter 6), "he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward

Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (verse 10). His enemies saw him (verse 11) - as Daniel knew they would - and his next stop was the den of lions.

In Acts 9.40 - "Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed ...'Tabitha, arise'". In Acts 20.36 at Miletus, and 21.5 on the shore at Tyre, Paul knelt down with his fellow Christians, and prayed, scenes given added poignancy as he was sure they would not meet again this side of heaven (Acts 20.17-38, another wonderful passage).

These few examples chosen from a longer list in God's Word show us that prayer and kneeling are natural partners. If you are out of the habit of kneeling, by yourself at home, or in the house group or congregation, you might just take another look at it; and when are kneeling alone, you might try praying aloud. It may take courage these days to kneel when you are amongst others, but so what? You are not kneeling to show off, but to assist yourself, and others if they wish, in the habit of prayer - and that has to be edifying for all concerned.

We finish with the ultimate example, of the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane - "And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed ..." (Luke 22.41). And we all know why He did.

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