

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS**  
**Commentary by Michael Sigler**  
**March 10, 2013**

**Daniel's Prayer**

Read Daniel 9:4b-14

**Key verse: "Compassion and deep forgiveness belong to my Lord, our God, because we rebelled against him" (Daniel 9:9).**

God's judgment. It is a subject almost no one wants to address. Outside the Church, a relativistic culture denies the reality of sin and judgment. In the Church, we often avoid this subject for fear of coming off as harsh, judgmental, or unloving. But maybe it is time we think again about divine judgment.

After all, most United Methodists profess on Sundays, in the words of The Apostles' Creed, our belief that Jesus Christ will "come again to judge the living and the dead." And it is in the New Testament, not the Old Testament, that such passages as these are found:

"Do not be deceived. God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows" (Galatians 6:7).

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

"For if the message spoken by angels [*that is, the law given to Moses at Sinai*], was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?" (Hebrews 2:2-3, *italics mine*).

It is true that God deals with people somewhat differently today under the covenant of grace than God did with Israel in the Old Testament: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). We know that we cannot earn our salvation by keeping the law. It is grace not law that gives us eternal life in Christ, when we turn to Him in faith. It is grace that then gives us the power to overcome willful, continual sin. And it is grace that provides forgiveness and new beginnings whenever we do sin.

For all who turn to Christ in repentance and faith, there is forgiveness and grace. But sin that is not confessed and forgiven, sin from which one refuses to repent, brings negative consequences. That is true today just as it was in the time of Daniel.

The prayer of Daniel in Daniel 9 is a prayer for forgiveness and restoration of the Jewish exiles in Babylon. Daniel recognized that their captivity was a judgment of God, because of their sin and rebellion. Daniel recalls how, many years earlier, Moses had warned Israel that if they obeyed God and followed His ways they would be blessed, but if they turned away from God, judgment would follow (Deuteronomy 28).

“We have sinned,” Daniel prays, “...ignoring your commands and your laws” (v. 5). Exile and captivity have come, Daniel understands, “because of their unfaithfulness when they broke faith with you” (v. 7) and because “we didn’t listen to the voice of the Lord our God” (v. 10).

Verse 10 reminds me of our tendency to reject the truth about our sin, whether the truth comes from our own reading of the Bible, from preaching, or from concerned family and friends. We reject the truth because it is sometimes painful and because changing our ways could be hard. We would rather hear soothing words, words that overlook or even accept our sin. But rejecting the truth leads eventually to loss, heartbreak, and judgment. Receiving the truth—even if it is painful—and seeking forgiveness and grace, leads to blessing!

Daniel intercedes for his nation and for himself, realizing the reason for their exile and captivity, but trusting in God’s “compassion and deep forgiveness” (v. 9). Captive Israel would eventually be restored to their land. In Daniel’s time, God was merciful to sinners and rebels who were willing to confess and return to the Lord. So the Lord is still today:

God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (1 Peter 3:9). “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Thank God for His mercy and grace. Thank God for a wonderful Savior and such a great salvation. But let us not fail to say to ourselves, to the Church, and to a lost and dying world: “We need to repent and seek God’s forgiveness and grace.”

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