

In this series called Pray Like Jesus and we have been unpacking the Lord's Prayer together and looking at how Jesus teaches us through this prayer, how to pray in line with God's will and his purposes.

Last week Pastor Steve began the second part of the Lord's prayer, asking God to give us our daily bread; this petition underlines our trust in God's timely provision for all our needs, and call us to generously share with those in need our abundance.

We continue this morning to look at the next petition about asking God for the forgiveness of our sins. Forgiveness is also a matter of God's hiding his face from someone's sin (Ps 51:9) ... [This relates to the loss of joy!]

² He said to them, "When you pray, say:

"Father,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.

³ Give us each day our daily bread.

⁴ **Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.**

And lead us not into temptation.'" (Lk. 11:2-4 NIV)

What exactly is going on when we pray this petition? I suggest that there are two internal and inter-related dynamics in our minds and hearts when we pray for God's forgiveness:

Telling Truth about Self.

Telling Self about Truth.

Let's start to look at the first dynamics: **Telling Truth about Self.**

Jesus assumes that asking for the forgiveness of our sins is a regular practice in the daily prayer-conversation of God's people with Abba Father.

Philo of Alexandria - a Jewish contemporary philosopher in Jesus' time – writes that **"there has never been a single man who, by his own unassisted power, has run the whole course of his life, from the beginning to the end, without stumbling."**¹

There is a universal moral conscience of rightness and wrongness; a yearning and need for forgiveness when a person has done something wrong.

This petition brings to the foreground our desire to be in control, to make our own decisions, to be the Captain of our ship, the King of our castle, the Master of our fate, and the Architect of our life.

The petition exposes the folly of our attempt to take over God's position of authority as the Creator-Father; it also

¹ Cited by R. W. Yarbrough, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation," *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, p. 499.

speaks to our distrust in God's good intention and purposes for our lives.

This is, in essence, is a manifesto of human independence that inverts the first part of the Lord's Prayer:

"Hallowed be **MY name**, **MY kingdom** come, **MY will** be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Where and how would this self-importance be detected? Pastor Craig Groeschel wrote *The Christian Atheist* and suggested that this kind of practical atheism is quite popular. For examples: When you believe in God ...

but not in prayer.

but pursue happiness at any cost.

but trust more in material wealth.

We abandon God's purposes for our lives and pursue selfish desires; according to N.T. Wright,

Sin = Failure of Vocation

We recognize that we'd messed up, royally!

It is not so much about how we'd messed up, but how we're going to make up with God!

The petition for forgiveness is saying this to God: "I want to make the wrong RIGHT!"

Asking for forgiveness involves confession of sin[s].

Confession is not a mere "I'm sorry" cliché without true remorse and repentance.²

Right at the beginning of His public ministry Jesus proclaims this: "The kingdom of God has come near. **Repent** and believe the good news!" (Mk. 1:15)

Regarding the bible teaching on repentance, Alan Hirsch and Rob Kelly incisively states that,

"Metanoia [i.e., repentance] therefore involves paradigm shift, the recognition and rejection of various false frameworks for understanding the world itself and waking up to a whole new world in which Christ is Lord and King."³

Confession relies solely on God's compassion and mercy, admitting our wrongs and agreeing with God's verdict.

We may try to avoid guilt by ...

² Cf. 2 Cor. 7:10-11, "¹⁰ Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. ¹¹ See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter."

³ Hirsch, Alan; Kelly, Rob. *Metanoia: How God Radically Transforms People, Churches, and Organizations From the Inside Out* (p. 40). 100 Movements Publishing. Kindle Edition.

"[Repentance] is to look, not backward with regret, but forward with hope; not downwards at our own shortcomings, but upwards at God's love. It is to see, not merely what we have failed to be, but what by divine grace we can now become; and it is to act upon what we see. To repent is to open our eyes to the light." Cf. Kallistos Ware, Cited by Hirsch & Kelly, *Matanoia*.

making excuses,
blaming others/circumstances,
covering it with “good works,”
running away from God and others.

But guilt works like a video machine that repeatedly shows our follies in techno-colours.

When guilt burdens our souls, then it steals the joy that we once knew in salvation.

Listen to the yearning of David,

“Create in me a pure heart ... renew a steadfast spirit within me ... Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit ...” (Ps. 51:10, 12.)

Unhealthy guilt could ...

cripple relationships,
destroy intimacy,
cause depression and physical illness,
and drowns a person in perpetual fear and shame.

Authentic and healthy guilt – godly sorrows –

drives us back to God,

motivates us to take personal responsibility – to repent - to seek forgiveness,
and leads us to freedom from guilt and to doing right.⁴

This leads us to the second dynamics of asking for forgiveness: **Telling Self about Truth.**

Like the waiting Father in the parable of the Prodigal son (Lk. 15), the petition for forgiveness of our sins tells truth about God to our Self:

God longs for our return; He welcomes us back.

God delights in forgiving His children who humble themselves and return to Him with a contrite heart so they might live a wholesome and full life, soaking in His outpouring of grace.⁵

He is not a tyrant who loves to inflict pain upon his children whenever they missed the mark or a sadist who takes pleasure in seeing their suffering.

This is how the Psalmist describes God’s heart:

“The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he

⁴ Cf. 2C7:10 - For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death.

⁵ Cf. Ex. 34:7; Num. 14:18; 2 Chron. 7:14.

harbour his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.” (Ps. 103:8-12.)

Sometimes the challenge is not so much about God’s unwillingness to forgive us but **our unwillingness to accept His forgiveness because of personal pride and misconceptions about who God is and how He acts toward His people.**⁶

Bob Goff writes:

“If mess-ups were push-ups, I’d be totally ripped ... Don’t let your failures talk you out of God’s grace. Grace moves us toward God and other people. When our failures try to keep us isolated, grace says it’s safe to show up and be seen once again.”

Genuine repentance of sin and personal experience of God’s forgiveness draw us closer to God and others; anything else is from Satan the Accuser,⁷ or our self preoccupation or self condemnation.

⁶ Tim Keller: “When people say ‘I know God forgives me, but I can’t forgive myself,’ they mean that they have failed an idol, whose approval is more important than God’s.”

⁷ Cf. Rev. 12:10.

Keep in mind God’s mercy and grace:

Mercy – God does not give us what we deserve.

God’s hand of mercy is always ready to lift us out of the ocean of self-made mess.

Grace – God gives us what we do not deserve.

God’s grace generates and tutors us to live out God’s love in godliness by the power of His Spirit.

The only way to get out of the mess we’d made is through the door of mercy and grace; and the key is the confession of our sins:

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 Jn. 1:9)

But as NT scholar David Crump writes, “the greater our experience of forgiveness, the greater our expressions of love and gratitude ... You cannot receive grace without sharing it.”⁸

So here is another Truth we must tell to Self:

Forgiven people are forgiving people.

“...forgive us our sins, **as we have forgiven those who sin against us** (Lk. 11:4).

⁸ David Crump, Knocking on Heaven’s Door, pp. 139, 140.

Jesus' whole life, from infancy and public ministry to His eventual death, resurrection and ascension, is God's story of forgiveness in techno colour.⁹

Before Jesus tells the parable of the unforgiving debtor in Matt. 18:23-35,¹⁰ He teaches that we are to forgive not seven times, but 70 x 7 = endless times because those who experienced his gift of grace and forgiveness are to make that gift available to others.

While I recognize that to forgive someone who has wounded us requires a process of some hard and heart work, it doesn't take away the detrimental effect of unforgiveness:

An unforgiving spirit

traps one in the past,

imprisons the individual in a cell of resentment & bitterness,

opens the door to forces of evil,

blocks spiritual growth,

⁹ Cf. Matt. 1:21; 26:28; Lk. 1:77; Mk. 1:4; Lk. 23:34; Jn. 20:23.

¹⁰ This parable describes a king forgives a large debt of a servant. Later, however, that same servant refuses to forgive a much smaller debt of another man. After the king hears about this, he rescinds his prior forgiveness and punishes his unforgiving servant.

hinders one's relationship with God.¹¹

Unforgiveness is like drinking poison yourself and waiting for the other person to die.

Marianne Williamson

Forgiving others is for our own benefits!

And when we practice forgiveness with each other, we become a community of compassion:

we bring healing to wounded souls,

we become shalom/peace-makers,

we shine light into darkness,

and we breathe life into death.¹²

We are forgiven and liberated from our guilt and shame for a mission, not just for inner joy and peace; the by product of forgiveness and spiritual renewal is God's children **being conduits of God's mercy and grace**.¹³

¹¹ Cf. Matt. 5:23-24; 6:14-15; Eph. 4:26-27; 2 Cor. 2:10-11; Col. 3:12-13; Ja. 1:19-20; Heb. 12:15. The major difference between hating and loving is perhaps that whereas to love somebody is to be fulfilled and enriched by the experience, to hate somebody is to be diminished and drained by it. Lovers, by losing themselves in their loving, find themselves, become themselves. Haters simply lose themselves. Theirs is the ultimately consuming passion. (Frederick Buechner)

¹² D. Bock, *Luke*, p. 1055.

¹³ Our experiences of forgiveness and worship, therefore, have a **missionary goal/objective**; they are **pre-evangelistic testimonies** of God's mercy and grace;

Author James Merritt writes, “Sin not only soils the soul, but it seals the lips. But when you are right with God, you will live for God and tell his story.”

Listen to David’s testimony,

“Restore to me the ***joy of your salvation*** and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that ***sinners will turn back to you.***” (Ps. 51:12, 13.)

No matter where you are in your relationship with God this morning, Jesus invites you to come to Him and receive His love and be renewing by God’s grace and mercy!

In closing I invite you now to do some personal business with God:

1. Lord, your word says that if I confess our sins, you are faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 Jn. 1:9) Now, I ask you to forgive _____; thank you for your forgiveness.
2. Lord, I am hurt by _____. But by your grace and strength, I forgive _____ just as you’d forgiven me.

and the focus is not on us but the King who renews us so we could **partner with God to restore His world!**