

What Jesus Said Concerning Prayer

by Zac Poonen

Jesus teaches that prayer must be continuous, sincere, and God-centered, and that we must pray with faith and not to impress others.

Duration: 54:25

Scripture: Matthew 6:6-18, Luke 18:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Topics: "Effective Prayer", "Forgiveness"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer as taught by Jesus, focusing on the need to shift from self-centered praying to God-centered praying. It highlights the significance of forgiving others as we have been forgiven by God, and the consequences of harboring unforgiveness. The sermon also delves into the Lord's Prayer, breaking down each aspect to guide believers in aligning their prayers with God's will and priorities.

Transcript

I want to share with you a few things about what Jesus said concerning prayer. A lot of people like to talk about prayer because it's a very spiritual thing to talk about. But I wonder if many who talk about it actually practice it.

And I wonder if most of us have understood what it means to pray. You know, I used to hear when I read the Bible, I used to hear people pray for 2 hours or 4 hours every day. So, I have a policy that I don't follow men unless I see their qualities or follow something in the Word of God.

Just because a man does something doesn't mean I have to do it. And that has protected me from so much condemnation and discouragement. Just not doing what I read in the Bible is what people do.

So, when I read things like that, I say, well, let me see how Jesus did it. I know Jesus would often go and pray, but he never does how long he prayed before. Except in one instance where it says he prayed all night.

And that's because the next morning he had to choose his 12 apostles. It was a very important decision that was going to affect the whole of Christianity for the next 2,000 years. And that's why he prayed all night.

But I was looking for places in the scriptures which tells us how long we should pray every day. So, when I was young Christian, people would give me guidelines on how I should read the Bible and pray. But as I look for a word from scripture, for a commandment, I'll tell you the two verses I found as to how long you should pray every day.

The first was the words of Jesus himself in Luke chapter 18. Luke 18 and verse 1 where Jesus was telling a parable to show that men ought to pray all the time. At all times.

Always. And that means you have to pray 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. And when you go to the epistles in 1 Thessalonians in chapter 5 and verse 17.

1 Thessalonians 5, 17. You read there that it says we must pray without ceasing. Without ceasing means without stopping.

So, our prayer life must be continuous. All the time. These are the two verses in the New Testament that tell us how often we should pray every day.

In the Old Testament we read of instances where morning, noon and evening they prayed three times a day. But here it is all the time. Without stopping.

So, ignoring all these testimonies of people who prayed for 2 hours and 4 hours and all which I don't want to follow. I said I want to follow what scripture says. Because then I won't be wrong.

And so I said how in the world can I pray all the time? Obviously it doesn't mean that I must be on my knees all the time or I should be looking up to heaven and praying all the time. I won't be able to do any other work. So, as I began to think about it seriously.

I don't know whether all of you have thought about it. Because I am sure you have read these verses. But as I said very often the tragedy with a lot of Christians is they read something and they don't think about it.

How am I supposed to do it? So, that's a bad attitude. You read something and you don't even ask yourself how am I supposed to do it. So, I thought about that a lot and I said well, in other words, I must be praying while I am doing other things.

That's the only way to pray all the time. That's the only way to pray 24-7. So, it was obviously prayer spoken of in these verses that I read.

It was not a conscious speaking in words. Because if I was speaking in words all the time I would never be able to do anything else. And then I began to think, what is it that I do all the time while I am doing all my other work? And I thought of breathing.

And I am not even conscious of it most of the time. If you heard a command which says breathe always, not at all difficult. In fact, we are doing it.

While you are doing other work, we are breathing. So, then I realized that prayer must be like breathing. One activity, I mean there are a lot of activities inside our body.

Many organs that are working 24 hours, but I am not consciously doing something with my liver or kidney or heart. What I am consciously doing is breathing. That is my activity.

Which I can stop if I want. I can hold my breath and stop. But I can't stop the heart or the kidney or the liver.

The only activity that I have control over, which I do all the time, is breathing. So, therefore I concluded that my prayer life must be like my breathing. Not something that I have to do for a certain amount of time, but all the time.

And as much as breathing was necessary for living, praying like that was necessary for my spiritual life. So, I tried to understand what this meant in our personal life. So, I looked at Jesus' teaching on prayer in Matthew chapter 6. In Matthew chapter 6, we read about Jesus' teaching on prayer.

And he gave us certain instructions here. Verse 5 onwards. When you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and the street corners, in order to be seen by men.

You already have that reward in full. But when you pray, go into your inner room, Matthew 6 verse 6, and when you shut your door, pray to your Father in secret. Your Father in secret will repay you.

So, here's another lesson that Jesus teaches concerning prayer. That I must never pray in order to impress other people. I must not talk about my praying to impress anybody.

I can tell someone I'm praying for you, or I prayed about that, but I must not pray in order to impress. And that happens particularly when we pray publicly in a church. For example, you lead in prayer.

And I found, in my early days as a Christian, that whenever I prayed in prayer publicly, I was always seeking to impress people. Every single time. I was very conscious that people are listening to what I'm saying in my prayer.

And so, I was very careful to say it in an impressive way. And I was young, Christian, and nobody taught me about these things, so I used to go back to my... I was working in the Navy on a ship, and I'd go back to my room, and I'd say, Lord, I'm sorry. And I judged myself, the way I prayed in the church service this morning, it was 100% to impress people.

If there was nobody in the room, I wouldn't have prayed like that. But because there were so many people there, I prayed in a way to impress them. So, I don't want to do it.

I want to pray to you. I tried to judge myself. So, the next occasion I prayed in public, again I found, I was very conscious that people are listening to me, and I'm conscious about how I pray.

And again, I would come home and repent. This went on for, not days, but years. But I was determined to come to a day in my life when I'd be able to pray in public, and I would not be bothered about who was there or not.

I would be completely free from the opinions of people sitting around me. I'd be praying to my Father in Heaven. It took a long time, but I'll tell you this.

If you examine yourself concerning the time when you pray in public, and go home and judge yourself, you'll find that most of your prayer was to impress people. And if you don't repent of it, you'll remain like that for the next 50 years. You'll never change.

But if you go home and judge yourself, and say, Lord, I don't want to do it like that, you won't change overnight. It may take you 10-15 years to become free from the opinions of men, free to try to impress people, but a day will come in your life when you'll be praying to God and not to men. You'll be praying, really asking God for something instead of trying to impress people with your prayer.

Now the solution to that is not just keep quiet. Never pray in public. Because if you never pray in public, you'll never get light on the way you pray, and then you won't change at all.

The advantage of praying in public is you get some light on yourself and you'll gradually change. So don't think the solution to that is just keep your mouth shut and never pray in public. Because that's guaranteed that you'll never change in all your life.

Because you don't get any light on yourself. So I want to encourage all of you to pray in public whenever you get the opportunity. And of course, you will pray, seeking to impress others, but go home and judge yourself.

Even if you pray for half a minute or one minute, learn to pray in public. Whenever people are invited to pray, pray. And then go home and cleanse yourself, judge yourself.

And a day will come in your life, when you have graduated from there. It's a tremendous thing. To be able to free from the opinions of men.

You'll finally learn to pray the way Jesus said. Don't be like the hypocrites, who seek to impress people. So then, now, when I pray, in public or anywhere, I go into an inner room, like it says in verse 6. I'm sitting in this room, but in my mind, I'm in an inner room, alone with the Father.

Nobody else is here. And I pray to Him. That's the place we should come to.

Even when you're praying in public, in your mind, you've shut the door. It says here, go into your room and shut the door, verse 6. You've shut the door of your mind from all the people here, and you pray to God, in secret. If you have never learned to do that, here is a command in scripture, that you will die, without having learned to obey.

You know, one of the prayers I pray to God is, I want to obey every commandment in your word, before I leave this earth. Every commandment. God doesn't give me commandments just to ignore.

If there's a single commandment in scripture, for a new testament, that I've not obeyed, I want to find out what it is and obey it, before I leave this earth. So I want to obey this commandment, where I can pray shutting the door, and praying to God. Completely undisturbed by what people think about it.

I want to encourage you to do it, because it will bring a liberation in your life. And the other thing Jesus said about praying is, verse 7. Don't use meaningless repetition, as the non-christian or the gentiles do, because they think they'll be heard for their many words. And that's another thing which I found in my life.

I thought, I mean, you can't pray for just 2-3 sentences and say Amen. I must pray at length. Then God will hear.

It's a lot of rubbish. God's not going to hear because he prayed for a long time. That's exactly what he's saying.

And don't use meaningless repetition. There are some Pentecostal churches, where they keep saying Hallelujah, Hallelujah a long time. To me it's just meaningless repetition.

And Jesus said don't use meaningless repetition. If you use the word Hallelujah, it's good. But mean it.

You're saying praise the Lord. For what? Tell him for what you're saying Hallelujah. But just to repeat it, is a meaningless repetition.

And Jesus said I must not use meaningless repetitions. So these are, I'm just telling you little things that you've heard a lot of Christians do. And it hasn't even probably bothered you that that's wrong.

And that's because we don't take some of these words of Jesus very seriously. So you'll find your Christian life progresses tremendously when you just learn to take the word, every word of scripture seriously. Do not use meaningless repetition.

That's what the heathen do. They think, listen to this, they think that God will hear them because they speak for a long time. That if a long prayer, oh God will definitely hear that.

Rubbish. In the Old Testament we read of, in 1 Kings chapter 18 of the prophets of Baal, who prayed for probably 6 or 10 hours. Nothing happened.

Then you read Elijah when they were praying for fire to come down. Elijah prayed for less than one minute. The fire came.

So it's not a question of long prayers. I don't believe Jesus prayed long prayers in public. So here is what we need to, don't be like them.

The other thing is when you pray, if you recognize that your father, like it says in verse 8, knows what you need before you ask him. It's important to remember that. Otherwise, our prayers will be like a big shopping list.

These are all the things I want Lord. Amen. A prayer is not supposed to be like that.

And your father knows what you need before you ask him. These are the few instructions that Jesus gave concerning prayer. One is, don't pray to impress others.

And the other is, don't keep on repeating something or pray long prayers, thinking God will hear that. And the other is, don't come to God with a shopping list. Your father already knows what you need.

Then you say, then what shall I pray for? Okay, the Lord says, I'll tell you what to pray for. He didn't say we must repeat this prayer every day. Our father, who art in heaven, some people repeat it.

I remember as a little boy, because I was brought up in a God-fearing home, and I was not born again, this is the only prayer I knew how to pray. So I remember very vividly, every morning when I got up, I'd never get out of bed till I first knelt down and said, Our father, who art in heaven, and went through that whole prayer. Amen.

Then I would get up every single day. I didn't even think about what I was saying. I think a lot of Christians who repeat that prayer are probably like me.

It was much later, after I was born again, and I began to seriously study it, I realized that I had spoken a lot of empty words to God all my life. I wasn't serious about it. We don't talk to men, I mean, we don't talk to each other with meaningless words, repeating something.

We never do it. But imagine, we've been talking to Almighty God with all those meaningless words. So I decided to just take myself more seriously, and I found that when I took this matter of praying more seriously, it changed my whole life.

Prayer became a very important thing in my life, and it was not going to be just a repetition. So, I began to think, What does this mean? What did Jesus mean by saying, Pray then in this way. So what he meant was, this should be the pattern of all my praying.

Every single prayer I pray should have this pattern, even if it's not the same words. And as I thought about it, I saw that it was not a shopping list. That's the first thing.

There were specific requests, but here was a spiritual way to pray. So, I just want to look at it. There are basically six requests here, in this prayer that Jesus taught.

But before he taught the six requests, he said, before you start praying, and it's very important for us to understand that, I'm not talking about a pattern. I'm not saying that every time you pray, you must start like this, Our Father who art in heaven. No.

He said, pray in this way, which means this should be the general pattern of your prayer. The first thing that we need to recognize, is that we are praying to our Father. That we have a dad in heaven, who he already said in verse 8, who knows all my needs.

So, he said, when you pray, say, Our Father. Not, Oh God. Oh Lord.

Now, I've heard lots and lots of Christians, who pray, Oh God. Oh Lord. There's nothing wrong in it.

He is God. He is Lord. But, I get the feeling that, there are people who don't know, that they have a dad in heaven.

We need to be very conscious, that we have, that he's our father. And, he's our dad. And, that's the first thing, Jesus wanted us to remember, when we pray.

Because, that's what brings faith. If I pray, recognizing that I'm talking to my dad, that's the first thing that will bring faith in my heart, that he's going to listen to me. But, not just father.

Father who are in heaven. That means, one who's almighty. One who can do anything.

So, that's the second thing I need to recognize. One is my dad, who cares intensely for me. And, the other is, because he rules in heaven, he's almighty.

There's nothing he cannot do. That also brings faith. First is the assurance of his love for me, because he's my father.

That brings faith. And, second, that he can do anything in the world. So, if I don't start there, it's not worthwhile praying.

If I don't start my prayer recognizing that I'm talking to one who loves me intensely and desires the best for me. That I'm talking to one who can do anything, who can solve any problem. That is the meaning of that simple phrase, Father in heaven.

So, don't go past that so quickly. Every time you pray, pray recognizing you're talking to someone who loves you intensely, who can solve every problem, who can do anything, impossible things. You can ask him.

If it is for the glory of God, you can ask him for the most impossible thing. And, you can begin with faith. So, Jesus was emphasizing the necessity of faith in that statement.

That's the meaning of our Father who art in heaven. If you don't begin with faith, you're not going to get anything. Then comes the six requests.

And, if you go through them one by one, you will see the first three requests concern God. And, the next three requests concern ourselves. The requests concerning God are, Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, and thy will be done.

And, the requests concerning ourselves come after that, which are, give us this day our daily bread, forgive us our sins, and don't lead us into temptation, but deliver us from Satan. So, notice, it's not that we should not pray for our needs. He said, yes, you can pray for your needs.

He taught us to pray for our needs. But, begin with God. So, that is why I call this God-centered praying.

Most of our prayers are self-centered. So, what the Lord was trying to teach his disciples was to shift from self-centered praying to God-centered praying. In other words, I'm not thinking primarily of my need, but God.

And, then comes mine, second. Now, if I don't do it that way, it's like standing on my head. God never planned for us to stand on our head.

The head must be on top of the feet below. So, God must be first, and our need must be second. But, if you disobey that command of God, and you always pray for your need, Lord, I need this, I need this, and pray for my child, and pray for this person, and that person, and the other thing in this house, and then my house, and my job, and this, and that, and the other, amen.

I haven't prayed in this way, at all. Then, don't be surprised if you don't get an answer. Because, you're not praying the way Jesus taught us to pray.

We have so many wrong concepts of prayer, that we have got, and I'll tell you why. Because, you've learned about prayer from human beings, and not from the Bible. You must make a decision in your life, that anything concerning your spiritual life, you must get your conviction from Scripture.

And, don't listen to a man, who does not point you to Scripture, who tells you his testimony, and his experiences, and how he did it. First of all, they may be fanciful stories, and even if they are personal testimonies, it may be just for him, not for me. But, if I go to Scripture, I know it's for me.

And, I'll tell you honestly, this has been one of the great things that has saved me from a lot of confusion and problems in my life, that I will not believe the greatest preacher in the world, if he can't show it to me from Scripture. Whatever it is, whether it's baptism in the Holy Spirit, or about prayer life, or evangelism, or

anything in the world, show it to me from the Word. I'll obey it.

I'll do it for the rest of my life. But, if you tell me this is the way you did it, brother, keep it to yourself. That's a testimony.

I'm glad to listen to your testimony, but I'm not going to do it. But, I think most of us are not like that. We listen to somebody, and he says something, and, oh, that worked for him, it'll work for you, necessarily, not necessarily.

If it is in the Word, it'll work for you. Otherwise, it may only work for him. So, it's very, very important as a principle.

I can tell you, I've followed that for 57 years, and I've never regretted it. So, when I pray now, most of the time, I always pray Father, Heavenly Father. That makes it very intimate, and when I'm alone, I call him Dad.

It's a bit informal to use that in public, so in public, I do what the Bible says, Jesus said Heavenly Father. But, when I pray in private, I do what it says in Romans 8, in verse 16. It says there, the Spirit, Romans 8, in verse 15, rather, the Spirit, the Holy Spirit cries out from within me, saying, Dad.

The word Abba, there in Romans 8, 15, is a Hebrew word, which, if it's translated into English, it means Dad. Abba, Father, or Dad, Father. So, it's right to call him Dad, if you can call him respectfully.

If you've learned to respect your Earthly Father, then you probably can call your Heavenly Father respectfully Dad. But, if you've never learned to respect your Earthly Father, then it's probably difficult to call your Heavenly Father Dad, because you won't have any respect when you call him by that title. But, it's a very intimate relationship that God wants with us when we pray.

So, here the Lord is teaching his disciples, learn to shift your prayer life from being centered in yourself to be centered in God. And then you'll find a lot of your problems are solved. You know that man was created about 6,000 years ago.

Adam was created about 6,000 years ago. And, during those 6,000 years, for more than 5,000 years, 5,300 years or so, everybody in the world believed that the Sun goes around the Earth. Because they saw it.

In the morning it's in the East, in the evening it's in the West, and the next morning it's in the East. And everybody on Earth believed that for more than 5,000 years. And that's why they got a lot of their scientific calculations wrong.

Because the Sun does not go around the Earth. Then it was when somebody decided to challenge that, that they discovered the Earth goes around the Sun. It appears that the Sun is going around the Earth because the Earth is rotating on its own axis.

So, the Sun is the center of the solar system. And God wants... He must be the center of our life. But if I make myself the center of our life, it's like people thinking the Sun goes around the Earth.

They got it all wrong. And they get all their calculations wrong. When I become the center of my life, I've got it all wrong.

That's not the way I'm supposed to be. That could be the reason for a lot of problems in my life. Because I've got the wrong center.

It's like you do a mathematics problem and you've gone wrong in the first line. In the first step you've gone wrong. Your answer will definitely be wrong.

Because you went wrong in the first step. I'm just telling you the reasons why most Christians have a pretty useless, worthless prayer life. They never believe that God can do anything.

Their prayer is more like winning a lottery. I may get it, I may not get it. But that's not the way God wants us to pray.

We pray and we're not sure whether God will ever hear it. And I think part of the reason is because we haven't done what Jesus told us to do to shift our center to the correct center which is God. A God-centered way of praying.

So in other words, I have to train myself for this because I'm not naturally like this. The children of Adam are 100% self-centered. Every child thinks only of himself.

He's not thinking of others. I mean, if he's playing with toys, he wants to grab it all himself. He wants to grab the biggest slice of cake for himself.

Man is basically self-centered. And we're like that. We think of ourselves.

We think of our family. And even when we come to Christ, we're thinking of ourselves. I want to go to heaven.

I want to be spiritual. I want to do this. And if I'm like this, then I will get a reward.

It's all I, I, I. And as long as we're like that, we're never going to be spiritual. True spirituality is to shift the center where it's not I anymore, but God. That's what he was teaching his disciples.

When you pray, let your primary request be, God, I want your name to be glorified. I want your name to be honored. That's my primary burden.

I mean, never mind if my headache and my backache and my cancer is not healed. Forget it. That's not important.

Let your name be glorified. How many people pray like that? Supposing you have a serious problem in your life. Would you ever think of praying that God's name should be glorified first? Or this problem of mine must be solved first? Well, no wonder it's never solved.

No wonder that sickness is never healed. Jesus said, when you pray, put God first. Let your primary concern be, let the name of Jesus be glorified.

Now, that won't come automatically. The first time I trained myself to pray like that is not really from my heart. At least it's from my mouth.

But over a period of time, that will really become the burden of our heart. Lord, I don't care if any need of mine is not met. I want the name of Jesus to be glorified in my country, in my town, in my church, in my home, in my life.

The name of Jesus must be glorified. And once we shift our center, after a while, it becomes our way of life. Today I don't have any doubt about whether the sun goes around the earth or the earth goes around the sun.

I don't have the slightest doubt. I'm absolutely sure the sun is the center of the solar system. That's the way God intended it.

God intended that our life must have God at its center. So I pray, thy name, Lord. I'm concerned about your name.

See, sometimes if you heard somebody spread a scandal about your name or your children's name, we get so disturbed. For many weeks we can be thinking about why in the world did that guy spoil my name and why in the world did he spoil my children's name by spreading that scandal. But do you know the name of Jesus is being dishonored in so many places? By Christians? Does that disturb us? The reason I speak so much against all these pastors who take money from people is because they are dishonoring the name of the Lord so much and it bothers me.

Why was Jesus so disturbed that people were making money in the temple? Because it dishonored God. When people take advantage of others financially, it dishonors God and I'm disturbed by it because I'm praying, Father, hallowed be thy name and that's not hallowing your name. So I want to stand against it.

I don't suffer anyway. I'm not going to give them any money and I don't lose anything but God's name is being hallowed. It's not being hallowed.

And the other thing is, Lord, thy kingdom come. I want your kingdom to come here on this earth. Lord, please come soon.

It's something which was one of the last prayers in the New Testament. Come soon, Lord Jesus. There must be longing in our heart for the kingdom of God to come and first of all, in our church, the kingdom of God, you know, the church is called an expression of the kingdom of God on earth.

Lord, I want to see the kingdom come in my church and I want your kingdom to come into the world. And third, thy will be done. It's thy name, thy kingdom, thy will.

So, when we pray, thy will be done, we can think of our own life. I say, Lord, I want your will to be done in my life. Whatever it is, I never want my will to be done.

That is how we are to pray. Always. That means that should be an attitude in my heart.

It's not that I'm consciously saying 24 hours a day, thy name be hallowed, thy kingdom come, thy will be done. No, no, no, no, we can't do it. Jesus himself didn't do it.

But gradually, as we meditate on it and we shift the center of our life, gradually that becomes our attitude. 24 hours a day. I want the name of the Lord to be honored, glorified.

And I never in my life want to do or say anything that will dishonor the Lord's name. And it would disturb me if I dishonor the Lord's name by something I did or said in my home or in my place of work or anywhere. Because it's become my way of life now.

Hallowed be thy name. I'm longing for the kingdom of God to come. And I'm praying, thy will be done in my life, Lord.

When I pray, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. I'm talking about my own life, first of all, not in everybody else's life. Lord, in my life, I want your will to be done.

And like the angels wait upon God in heaven and whatever he says to do, they do immediately. They don't say, I'll think about it or no angel says, I'll pray about it. No.

Once God has said something, they do it immediately because they know God has said it. So we can wait if you're not sure that God has said it. If I'm not sure about a particular course of action that God wants me to do, then I'll wait.

I don't mind waiting six months or more. But once I'm sure that God said that, I don't wait one second. If I see something clearly written in scripture, that God said it, I've got to do it immediately.

It's only such a person who can pray, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. It must be done in his own life, first of all. So now we've got the center correct now.

That means I've trained myself. It takes time. It won't happen overnight.

But if you train yourself to pray like this, this will really happen in your life, where 24 hours a day, your life is centered in God and you think of God's name and God's kingdom and God's will. And when you do that, I tell you, God will honor you because you're honoring God by putting him first. And the word of God says, those who honor me, I will honor.

Okay, then we come to our own needs. And our own needs are, we would think our own needs, first of all, we should talk about our spiritual needs. Let's overcome the devil.

No. The Lord is very, very practical and down to earth. We like to act spiritual and say, Lord, we first pray for our spiritual needs.

The Lord says, no, first of all, pray for your earthly needs. Give me this day my daily bread. It's such a down to earth prayer.

Is God interested in your material earthly needs? Sure. And here is the proof of it. Jesus taught us to pray for our material earthly needs.

Give me this day my daily bread. And that includes food, shelter. I need a house to live in to eat my daily bread.

I need a job in order to earn my daily bread. Do you know how much is included in that one request? Give me a job, give me a house, give me food, give me clothing. I need to wear clothes to go to work.

And please help me to educate my children. That's also there. Because they need to earn their daily bread one day.

And if I don't take that responsibility now to educate them, how will they earn their daily bread? They'll be uneducated homeless people begging for bread. I don't want that. So there's a lot involved in that simple request.

Give us this day our daily bread. My food, my clothing, my shelter, my children's education. And help for the family.

It's all in that. It's all in that. All my earthly, physical needs are included in that simple prayer.

Give us this day our daily bread. And one other thing I want to say here is if you notice in this prayer, the word me is never found. Never.

It's not give me. It's give us. Teaching us that we shouldn't be thinking only of ourselves when we pray.

We need to think of others also. Lord, is my brother in need of daily bread too? I'm thinking of him as well. My brother is in need, some type of physical need.

I need to think of him. I can't think of the whole world. Only God can think of the whole world.

I can think of the small circle in which God has placed me, my family, my local church, because the capacity of my heart is small. If I were God, I could love the whole world. But because the capacity of my heart is small, I think first of all of my family and then the fellowship of the church I'm in.

And then I go on from there. The next request is also concerning myself. Forgive us our sins exactly like we have forgiven others.

That's a very serious prayer. Many people don't realize how serious it is. What you're saying is, Father, I want you to forgive me in exactly the same way as I have forgiven that guy who harmed me so terribly some years ago.

Okay. Let's start. How did you forgive that person who harmed you so terribly some years ago? You never want to see him.

You never want to talk to him. You wish some evil will come to him. And you're saying, Father, forgive me like that.

Do you really want the Father to forgive you like that? That's what you're praying. Forgive us as we've forgiven. Exactly in the same way I treat that fellow who treated me badly.

I want you to treat me in the same way. See, all of us have experienced. Other people have done harm to us and tried to do harm to us.

A number of people have probably tried to do harm to us and done harm to us. And I'm saying to God, Lord, I've forgiven all of them. And I've forgiven them from my heart freely.

I want you to forgive my heart freely. And when I meet that person, I'm not going to hold it against him that he treated me like that five years ago. And Lord, when you forgive me, please don't hold it against me that I did so many things against you for many years of my life.

That is full and free forgiveness. You can experience the riches of God's forgiveness if you forgive others like this. And many people don't enjoy the riches of God's forgiveness because there's somebody whom they haven't forgiven in the way God forgave them.

This is a very serious thing. It's not a small thing. Because in another parable, in Matthew chapter 18, Jesus spoke about someone who got forgiveness from his king but did not forgive somebody else who

harmed him.

And it says here in Matthew 18, the kingdom of heaven, verse 23, is like a man who was brought to a king to settle accounts with him. And he owed him 10,000 talents, verse 24. And in the margin of my Bible, it says, that is 10 million dollars.

That's a lot of money. He owed the king 10 million dollars. It's impossible for him to pay it.

But he fell down and said, have patience with me, I will repay everything. He was foolish. He could never repay it.

And the king knew he could never repay it, just like we can never repay for all the sins we have committed. And the Lord had mercy on him and said, OK, I forgive you it all. Just like God forgave us, verse 26, Matthew 18, 26.

He forgave all our debt. But then that slave went out and found another slave of his who owed him 100 denary. I don't know how much that is, but it's probably a very small amount, like 10, 15 dollars that that guy owed him.

And here he had been just forgiven a few minutes ago 10 million by the king and he meets this guy who owes him 10, 15 dollars and it says he caught him by the throat and began to choke him for those 15 dollars. He said, pay back what you owe me. And that man said the same thing to him which he told the king.

Have mercy on me, I'll pay you, give me time. He said, no! Verse 30, I can't give you any time. Took him to the court and got him imprisoned because he hadn't paid that 15 dollar debt.

Some of the other slaves saw that, verse 31, and went and told the king, Do you know what that slave did whom you forgave so much? He went and caught somebody and put him in jail for 15 dollars. So the king called him back. You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you entrusted me.

Shouldn't you also have forgiven? Now you've got to pay back that 10 million dollars you remember you owed me, which I forgave you. I'm now unforgiving you that. Have you heard of unforgiving? God unforgiving us? You've probably never heard of that in your life.

You've heard about God forgiving you. Have you heard of God unforgiving you, cancelling that forgiveness? It happens. That all the sins you were forgiven, God puts it all back into your account saying it's not forgiven.

Sorry. Now a lot of people think that can't happen because doesn't God say he's forgotten all my sins? No. There's not a single verse in the Bible that says God has forgotten all my sins.

If you read carefully, it says in Hebrews 8.12, I will not remember. That means I choose not to remember. He doesn't say I've forgotten because if he's forgotten, how can he put it back on us? We know it cannot be forgotten because I remember the rotten things I did 60 years ago and my memory is not better than God's.

If I can remember what I did 60 years ago, God can remember very well what I did. God doesn't have a poor memory but he chooses not to remember because I've repented and come in the name of Christ and asked for forgiveness. So when I forgive somebody else, God's not asking me to forget what he did.

That's impossible. It is impossible to forget the evil that other people have done to you. And if anybody says they're forgotten, I'll tell him to his face he's a liar.

God doesn't ask us to forget. He tells us to forgive him the way he forgives me. He doesn't forget.

So he says you don't have to forget what he did but choose not to remember it when you meet him because God's forgiven you a million times more than that. That guy owes you \$10, God's forgiven you \$10,000,000. That's about the proportion of the worst sin somebody did to us.

Say somebody murdered my daughter, \$10 compared to what I've committed against God. Do you believe that? That if somebody did the worst possible crime against you it's one millionth of what you did against God. A lot of people haven't understood that because they haven't understood the gravity and seriousness of their sin against God.

That's why they get so focused on this terrible evil this person did to me. Aha! You have no understanding of how serious sin is in your life against God. What I learned from this is the worst sins that somebody can do against you is one over million of what you've done to God.

So whatever I've done against God is a million times greater than all the sins that other people have done against me. Think of all the evil that everybody in the world has done against you. Total it all up.

Multiply it by one million. That's what you've done against God. That's what I learned from this parable.

And there you see the hardness of a man's heart when he's been forgiven so much. And if there's one human being anywhere in the world whom you have not forgiven I'll tell you what God will say to you. There are three things he will say.

Please listen. Let me repeat it again. If you're a child of God who's been forgiven all your sins cleansed in the blood of Jesus and there's one single human being somewhere in the world whom you have not forgiven here are the three things God says about you.

Number one. Verse 32 You're a wicked person. You are wicked.

Now when God turns around and calls you wicked. Boy you better take it seriously. Wicked is worse than evil.

Wicked. Filthy. Good for nothing.

Rotten. Useless. That's what God's calling you.

Do you want God to call you a filthy, good for nothing useless person? That is what he's calling you. If there's one person you have not forgiven. You may think God is calling you my loving child.

No. He's calling you a wicked person. Don't fool yourself.

He is calling you a wicked person. That's what Jesus said. Secondly.

The verse 34 He's angry with you. You think God's smiling at you? Not at all. That's what some preacher fooled you.

God is angry with you. Why? Not because you're a sinner. Not because of that.

But because you haven't forgiven somebody. God loves us. But if you don't forgive somebody that turns to anger.

I'm quoting the words of Jesus. These are the words of Jesus. Heaven and earth will pass away.

This world will not pass away. God calls you wicked. He's angry with you.

And here's the worst part of it. Number three. He will send the demons to torture you.

Verse 34. He hands you over to the torturers. And the demons come and harass you with scary dreams and sicknesses and illnesses that never get cured.

That's the work of torturers. The demons have got at you. And you can't live a normal Christian life.

Because the demons are at you. All because there's somebody somewhere you have not forgiven. That's how serious it is.

Jesus says in conclusion. Verse 35. So shall my heavenly father do to you if you don't forgive your brother from your heart.

I'll tell you something. The vast majority of Christians don't believe that. And that's why their lives are so useless for God.

They drift along and say Oh God, brother, I've been trying for victory over sin for so long. I've been trying to listen to everything you say. I tried to.

I tried to. Nothing happened. Nothing will ever happen.

I might as well tell you now. You'll be trying for the next 50 years. Nothing will happen.

You first forgive that guy. Many miracles take place when you just forgive someone. It's like that.

Father in heaven, forgive me exactly like they're taking their hands off you. Where you're released from the grip of demons who are torturing you. Remember the three things Jesus said.

Take a few moments to think about what we heard just now and ask God to impress whatever is your particular need about all the things that you heard. That those particular things which apply to you you will take seriously. Thank you Father for this time.

In Jesus name, Amen.

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