



FORGIVE US AS WE FORGIVE

Importance of relationships in prayer

1. This pillar of prayer focuses directly on relationships. Our Father calls upon us to mend and keep our relationships whole and well.

a) This prayer assumes some sort of a breakdown in relationship either between us and God or between us and those around us.

b) Something has come in between us and broken-down fellowship. There is a breach that needs to be repaired.

c) The heart is always affected adversely when we *fall into sin* or have struggled to forgive those who have truly offended us.

i. It is important to discern whether we have genuinely suffered a wrong or whether we are simply *easily offended* in general.

A deeper work of reconciliation and renewal necessary to true spiritual health

1. *Reconciliation* almost always involves much more than simply *confessing* our sin to God, although that is the beginning point (I Jn. 1:9; Jas. 5:14-16).

2. Thankfully, we know that the Lord will forgive us when we pray.

a) The woman caught in adultery (Jn. 8:1-11)

b) *Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing* (Lk. 23:34).

c) The prodigal and his brother (Lk. 15:11-32).

3. The heart must be renewed after we have sinned or held something against someone else, whether justly or unjustly.

a) When David sinned against the Lord through adultery and murder, He *confessed, sought cleansing, and prayed for a clean heart* (Psm. 51)

4. *Renewal* means that we come back to God's standard—Repentance.

5. *Renewal* at its deepest level occurs through the cleansing of *conscience*.

a) Have you ever noticed that once you have crossed a line it is easier the next time?

b) The apostle Paul, speaking about conscience, tells us, *"Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, through the pretensions of liars whose consciences are seared"* (I Tim. 4:1-2).

i. There are, of course, different degrees of *searing* or callousness.

c) Jesus spoke of a sick conscience when he said, *"For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn for me to heal them"*(Mt. 13:15).

i. When conscience is sick, we lose the disposition to hear the word and Spirit of God. *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"* was Jesus' exhortation to the churches in The Revelation.

6. Paul tells us that we must keep a good conscience: *"whereas the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith"* (I Tim. 1:5).

a) He also affirms that a corrupt conscience can play a role in leading one to a *shipwrecked faith*. (I Tim. 1:18-20).

7. Thankfully, our conscience can be purged from all iniquity through the blood of Christ.

a) *"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God* (Heb. 9:14).

8. We can return to the presence of God with full assurance through the cleansing of a calloused heart by the blood of Christ.

a) *"Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw*

near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10: 19-22).

Forgiving one another

1. Jesus emphasizes the importance of forgiving one another by expounding on it later in the same passage: *“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Mt. 6:14-15).*

a) He is clearly teaching that, though our forgiveness was purchased through His blood on the cross, we must show the same mercy to others, if we desire to benefit from the work He did. A failure to forgive puts our own *continued* forgiveness in jeopardy. We are not saying He will “unforgive” what is forgiven.

b) Jesus illustrates this truth in Matthew 18:21-35.

i. Note especially that we must *“forgive from the heart”* (v. 35).

And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil (v 13)

The world is a dangerous place

1. For the true believer, who desires to please the Lord at all times, the world we live in is a dangerous place.

a) We are constantly exposed to things that, by nature or purpose, are set against us regarding our great pursuit and pleasure: pleasing God.

b) There are three things that make up this challenge: the world, the flesh, and the devil.

i. The world and the flesh (man’s fallen state) are contrary by nature.

ii. The devil is set against us by purpose and plan. He hates us and seeks to destroy all that we are, because we are created in God’s image.

“Lead us not into temptation”

1. If anybody knew the reality of being tempted, it was our Lord Jesus Christ.

a) It is important that we understand that Jesus is telling us to pray that God, the Father, would not lead us into a season of temptation i.e. testing or proving.

b) Not that the Father tempts to sin (Jas. 1:12-15), but He can set the stage to be tested.

c) Job was tested with the permission of God (Job 1-2): *“Have you (Satan) considered my servant, Job?”*

d) The Holy Spirit Himself *“led”* Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Mt. 4:1-11).

i. Note that the devil is the *tempter*, not God, but Jesus was *led* there by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of testing.

e) Jesus said, *“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren”* (Lk. 22:31-32).

f) Peter indicates that there are moments when testing is called for in our lives: *“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”* (I Pet. 1:6-7).

g) While we will not avoid all exposure to the devil, Jesus urges us to pray that His Father (and ours) would limit such times and seasons of testing.

“But deliver us from evil”

1. This prayer gives us great consolation and encouragement when we do face the day or season of trial or test.

a) The Lord Himself will be *with us* in the fire as He was with the three faithful Hebrew young men who in their moment of temptation to worship another god were tossed into the furnace (Dan. 3:13-25). There was a *fourth* man with them!

2. James teaches us *“to count it all joy when you fall into various trials”* (Jas. 1:2) knowing that God is working through it all (Jas. 1:3-4; Rom. 8:28).

3. Peter teaches us to be sober and vigilant in times of trial and to resist the devil who is roaring against us (I Pet. 5:8-9). James affirms the same (Jas. 4:7).

4. The apostle Paul tells us that we have a spiritual armory to combat the devil (our true enemy) in the day of battle (Eph. 6:10-18).

a) Through this prayer we prepare and use the armor to defeat our enemy.