

Not if but When you...Forgive

1/30/2022

Matthew 6:9–15 (CSB)

THE LORD'S PRAYER

⁹ "Therefore, you should pray like this:

Our Father in heaven,
your name be honored as holy.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come.

Your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And do not bring us into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.

¹⁴ "For if you forgive others their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you as well. ¹⁵ But if you don't forgive others, your Father will not forgive your offenses.

Introduction:

A. Jesus expected that every follower would do 4-things:

1. Pray.
2. Give.
3. Fast.
4. Forgive

A. I have been hearing some great stories from this sermon series.

1. People who tithe for the first time, and experience financial miracles.
2. We had whole families, including kids, fast this past week.
3. Many of us are praying more than ever, and enjoying it.
4. I believe that God has so much more in store for us than we even know.
5. However: Nothing stops a move of God's Spirit quite like unforgiveness.

B. Scripture demonstrates a recurring theme connected to the Peace of God and the Presence of the Holy Spirit.

1. That recurring theme is forgiveness.
2. Forgiveness does not stop with God forgiving me of my sins, but of me forgiving others who have sinned against me.
3. Unfortunately, too many of us are missing out on the peace of God and the anointing of the Holy Spirit because we are actively engaged in bitterness, envy, strife, and anger towards others.
4. And these things are the fruit of unforgiveness.

C. If we, as God's people, are going to experience the fullness of God's plan and blessings for our lives, we are going to have to deal with the difficult topic of forgiveness.

1. We are going to have to talk about sin.
2. We are going to have to let wounds and trauma heal.
3. We are going to have to forgive ourselves and accept forgiveness.

1. Forgive us our debts, as we forgive others. Matt 6

A. Jesus taught His followers to pray daily and persistently.

1. Daily, we are to bless God.
2. Daily we are invited to ask for our daily need and bread.
3. Daily we are invited to participate in forgiveness.

B. Jesus invited His followers to “daily” forgive others.

1. The Greek uses a word for “offense” in verses 14-15 that means “trespasses”.

a. To trespass is to take a false-step.

b. Trespasses wrong us or our property.

c. This can be intentional or unintentional.

d. Some people trespass on purpose; but some trespasses are simply by accident.

e. Some people do not know they are crossing a boundary with you.

2. We are “offended” when someone takes a “false” or “wrong” step with us.

3. What we do with that offense effects our relationship with Jesus and with others.

C. Jesus’ prayer and teaching in Matthew 6 leads us to understand that this world is not perfect.

1. Don’t be surprised when someone offends you or hurts you or trespasses against you.

2. This is part of the human condition.

3. Just as Peter asked “how many times must we forgive, 7 times”, Jesus’ response of 70 times 7 reminds us that there will always be plenty of opportunities to harbor unforgiveness towards others.

D. Today’s culture is constantly offended.

1. Our culture’s offense is a great opportunity for the church to demonstrate what Christlike behavior looks like!

2. To harbor hate and unforgiveness is natural:

a. to forgive is supernatural.

b. We have been called to participate in supernatural things.

E. I wish it was easy for us to read Matthew 6 and immediately start forgiving people.

1. But forgiveness isn't easy.
2. The place to start this conversation is to discover what Scripture says about the dangers of not forgiving others.
3. Why does Jesus say "if you don't forgive, the Father doesn't either?"
4. Why is unforgiveness such a big deal?
5. What does unforgiveness look like?

Scripture offers plenty of conversation around the theme of forgiveness.

Scripture

Ephesians 4:25–32 (CSB)

²⁵ Therefore, putting away lying, **speak the truth, each one to his neighbor**, because we are members of one another. ²⁶ **Be angry and do not sin.** Don't let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and don't give the devil an opportunity. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal. Instead, he is to do honest work with his own hands, so that he has something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ No foul language should come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear. ³⁰ **And don't grieve God's Holy Spirit. You were sealed by him for the day of redemption.** ³¹ **Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice.** ³² **And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.**

Colossians 3:12–15 (CSB)

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, **put on** compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and **forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive.** ¹⁴ Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ, to which you were also called in one body, rule your hearts. And be thankful.

2. Why do I have to forgive? The Holy Spirit is grieved when we do not forgive.

A. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is directly connected to forgiveness.

1. When God forgives us, He sends his Holy Spirit to live in us.
2. The Holy Spirit then seals our salvation and makes that salvation real.
3. We then become the "temple of the Holy Spirit", where the presence of God lives in us.

B. **Because the Holy Spirit is a person and not an "it", He feels emotion such as excitement and pain.**

1. That is why it is appropriate for the Apostle Paul to tell us not to "Grieve" the Holy Spirit.
 - a. Inanimate objects don't grieve.
 - b. Only living beings grieve and express sorrow.

2. **It is a terrible thought that you and I, by our actions and behaviors, can actually cause the Spirit of God to grieve in us.**

C. Paul gave us a glimpse into the mind of God when he said that we are to let go of all bitterness, anger, malice, and shouting at each other.

1. These actions grieve (cause distress) to Holy Spirit.

2. Anger, bitterness, malice, and shouting are all symptoms of hatred and unforgiveness.

a. *Therefore, when I rehearse in my mind the wrongs someone has done to me, I'm practicing unforgiveness.*

b. *When I actively look for opportunities to punish someone for the wrong committed against me, I'm practicing unforgiveness.*

c. *When I rejoice in the downfall of the one who caused me pain, I am no longer acting or behaving Christlike I'm walking in unforgiveness.*

d. And because my actions and inner world are not in alignment with Christ, I distress (grieve) the Spirit of God in me.

3. That is why Paul said to get rid of ALL of these things.

a. It is normal and natural to experience anger and not want to forgive.

b. But we are not called to natural behaviors but supernatural and to forgive someone is a truly supernatural act.

D. What is in it for me?

1. **We can become so use to the fruit of bitterness that we cannot imagine our life without it.**

2. But the absence of bitterness and unforgiveness fosters God's peace in our lives.

The absence of bitterness allows the Holy Spirit to be Himself in us. This means that I will become like Jesus. When the Spirit is grieved, I am left to myself, and I will struggle with emotions ranging from anger to fear. But when the Holy Spirit is not grieved, He is at home with

me; He will begin to change me into the person He wants me to be, and I will be able to manifest the gentleness of the Spirit. Relinquishing bitterness is an open invitation for the Holy Spirit to give you His peace, His joy, and the knowledge of His will.¹

3. Many of us want more of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
 - a. We aren't content with our present level of relationship with God.
 - b. We want more of His power and presence.
 - c. For some of you, the next step is to experience forgiveness and to share forgiveness with someone in your life.
4. You have to believe something before you will ever forgive:
You were not designed to harbor hate towards others.
 - a. You were not created to be a vessel of anger and hatred and bitterness.
 - a. A major problem with the Critical Race Theory is that it teaches hatred as a fundamental and necessary attitude.
 - b. Communism teaches an outrageous love for the Supreme leader and absolute hatred toward certain groups.
 - c. Perhaps your parents taught you to hate black people, or women, or the rich, or the drug addict, or someone else.
 - b. We must understand that we are created to be vessels of God's love, peace, and presence.

¹ R. T. Kendall, [*Total Forgiveness: When Everything in You Wants to Hold a Grudge, Point a Finger, and Remember the Pain—god Wants You to Lay It All aside*](#) (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2010).

c. That is only possible with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

1. As long as my vessel is full of hate and anger, I have no room for love.

2. As long as my vessel is contaminated with bitterness and offense, everything good that comes in will be contaminated.

d. The Holy Spirit will not live in the same house as bitterness, anger, and unforgiveness.

e. You must choose between the hatred you have hung on to for so long or the anointing of God.

Let me show you this from our passage from Colossians:

Colossians 3:12–15 (CSB)

¹² Therefore, as God’s chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, **put on** compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and **forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive.** ¹⁴ Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ, to which you were also called in one body, rule your hearts. And be thankful.

3. The fruit and ministry of the Holy Spirit is undone by unforgiveness.

A. Paul tells the church at Colossae to put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

1. The word “put on” refers to the act of putting on clothes.

2. There are two interesting things about putting on clothes:

a. **First**, putting on clothes is an intentional act.

1. We don’t accidentally put clothes on.

a. You may not have put much thought into clothing yourself today, but you did get up and put clothes on.

b. You went through the act of putting on a shirt, putting your pants on one leg at a time, and putting on underwear (hopefully not in that order).

2. If you are going to wear the fruit of the Spirit such as compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, it isn't going to happen on accident.

a. You are going to have to intentionally wear those things.

b. You are going to have to choose to wear patience, and kindness, and compassion.

c. You are going to have to "Put on" those things.

b. **Second**, putting on clothes is a learned behavior that becomes second nature.

a. We weren't born knowing how to clothe ourselves, but all of us learned.

b. Part of the growing process is that we eventually learn how to put clothes on.

1. It may be funny for a 1 or 2 -year old to run around the church with no pants on.

2. But it is illegal for adults to run around with no pants on.

c. The good news is that we can learn to put on the clothes of patience, gentleness, and kindness.

d. All of us should learn to clothe ourselves with the peace of God.

1. Paul made this a command.

2. "Therefore, because you are God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, PUT ON these things."

e. Because of our status and relationship to God, it is not befitting us to live without the covering of the Holy Spirit as demonstrated by compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

B. The opposite of clothed is...naked.

a. Our sinful, naked condition, displays everything we don't want to be seen.

b. Our naked condition is full of anger, hatred, bitterness, and unforgiveness.

1. Picture: While preparing, I had two pictures:

2. One picture, is that because of wear and tear and accidents and frustrations, we at times rip holes in our clothing that exposes, at least very briefly, our anger or bitterness or our hate.

a. When this is the case, we are called to put on fresh the garments that God has given us.

b. We repent, confess, and recover.

3. The other picture was of people who were intentionally wearing holes in their clothes.

a. Like the people who buy jeans with large, manufactured holes, some of us are wearing garments that purposely display those things that

God has called us to cover up with gentleness, and love, and the fruit of the Spirit.

b. People are bragging about showing off what God has told them to hide.

c. The only way to cover up and neutralize our nakedness is through the presence of the Holy Spirit and intentionally putting on the clothes God has for us.

d. **If the Lord made us t-shirts to wear that showed our heart condition, what would yours say?**

a. Angry?

b. Bitter?

c. Broken?

d. 20-year feud with my sister?

e. Refuse to talk to my dad?

f. I can't sleep at night because I hate you so much?

e. How do we change the script?

f. How do we experience the peace and power of God in our lives?

4. We experience God's peace through forgiveness.

A. Just as the Lord forgave you, you also are to forgive.

1. I believe this sentence is the linch-pin of the passage.

2. It is forgiveness that connects the peace of Christ to us.

B. First, we must experience God's forgiveness applied to our lives.

1. At salvation we experience the canceling of our sin debt.

2. Psalm 103:8-12 (CSB)

⁸ The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love. ⁹ He will not always accuse

us or be angry forever. ¹⁰ He has not dealt with us as our sins deserve or repaid us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his faithful love toward those who fear him. ¹² As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

3. God chooses to forgive you and I totally the moment we are saved.

- a. He isn't holding a grudge against us.
- b. He isn't waiting for you to mess up again in order to remind you of the last time you failed.
- c. He is not secretly plotting against you to expose your sin.

4. **God's forgiveness is total and complete in Jesus.**

C. Because this is how we are forgiven, this is how God expects us to forgive others.

1. We are to forgive others and bear with one another.
2. As we exercise our forgiveness towards others we reap the peace and blessings of God that we receive at salvation.

a. **You will not know God's peace if you are harboring unforgiveness towards someone.**

b. We are called to be examples of Jesus in our world, and the example He set for us is an example of forgiveness not hate.

3. That is why **when we are unforgiving, merciless, and graceless, we become peace-less.**

C. **Second**, you must forgive yourself.

1. Many of us can accept Christ's forgiveness, but we cannot accept our own.

- a. We feel as if we do not deserve forgiveness.
 - b. Perhaps you believe you deserve the pain.
 - c. You use your own anger to punish yourself for what you did, or didn't do.
2. "Not forgiving ourselves is self-hatred; it is being angry with ourselves." ²
- a. As we will see in a moment, if you confess your sin you are forgiven with God.
 - b. "Forgiving oneself means to experience the love that keeps no record of our *own* wrongs. ³
3. Forgiving yourself does not deny what you did or what the results are.
- a. Denial is not forgiveness.
 - b. Forgiveness is accepting what I do not deserve.
 - c. Forgiveness is unwrapping a gift I cannot afford.
 - 1. Picture: Many of you are comfortable sacrificing to give your kids a gift at Christmas or a birthday.
 - 2. God has witnessed many of you sacrificing and doing without so that you could love and bless another.
 - 3. Forgiving yourself is like going to the pile of gifts at Christmas and finding a gift with your name on it that you didn't expect.
 - a. The gift isn't from your spouse.

² Kendall, R. T. 2010. [*Total Forgiveness: When Everything in You Wants to Hold a Grudge, Point a Finger, and Remember the Pain - God Wants You to Lay It All aside*](#). Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House.

³ Kendall, R. T. 2010.

- b. It isn't from your kids or your boss.
- c. Yet, it is yours all the same.
- d. Forgiving yourself, like Christ has forgiven you, is part of the gift of Salvation.

5. Do I have the right to not forgive?

A. Some of you have experienced terrible actions committed against you.

1. God isn't asking you to deny that.
2. God isn't minimizing the sinfulness of people's actions against you.
3. Forgiveness doesn't require us to go back to that abusive husband, the drug-dealing sister, or the evil boss. (**Forgiveness and reconciliation are not the same thing**).
4. Yet, **to forgive someone, we have to confess that someone has hurt and wronged us.**
5. Without confession of sin there is no forgiveness.

1 John 1:8–9 (CSB)

⁸ If we say, "We have no sin," we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

B. The word "confess" is translated from the Greek word *homologeō*.

1. *Homologeō* is a compound word.
 - a. *Homo* means "the same."
 - b. *Logeō* means "to say or speak."
- 2) When you put it together it means **to say the same thing**.
3. To confess your sin means that you say the same thing about your sin that God says about your sin—to agree with God concerning your sin.

C. Not only must we confess the sins we have committed, but we also must confess those things which have been done to us.

1. Example: **Say you have wronged me.**

a. As long as I deny that you have sinned against me, I am deceived.

b. I am acting like nothing is wrong even though I have suffered some sort of injury.

c. As long as I repress and deny that, I can't forgive because I am lying to myself about what has happened.

d. In other words, I am not saying the same thing God is saying about the situation.

1. **God takes sin serious even when we don't.**

2. He isn't overlooking the sin or pain caused you.

3. He takes it seriously, as evidenced by the Cross of Jesus.

4. Denying the sin against us doesn't take us off the hook for practicing forgiveness.

5. Denial delays the price of forgiveness.

1. Denial increases the cost of forgiveness.

2. Instead of dealing with the price and pain today, instead we accumulate decades of pain.

3. Unforgiveness doesn't hurt the other person, it hurts us.

4. When I choose to not forgive, I pay the greatest price.

2. There are times when we get ourselves worked up about a situation.

a. And we reach a point where we are lashing out, we are cranky, we are miserable.

b. And when someone ask what's wrong, we deny anything is wrong.

c. As long as you hold onto bitterness and anger, you won't have peace.

3. **To receive the peace of God, you must practice the forgiveness of God.**

a. Therefore, do whatever it takes to be honest with yourself before God.

b. Say, "God I'm angry and I know I'm angry. That person hurt me and it is driving me crazy. I've been holding on to this for too long, making excuses, and enjoying the presence of my anger.

c. But I can't have the peace of God and hold on to my anger. Change me oh God!

D. Many of us need to forgive.

1. Maybe you are angry about a wrong done to you.

a. You don't think about it every day, but sometimes there is a trigger and it reminds you of what that person did.

b. And when you think about it, all of the old feelings come pouring in.

1. We are living in a world full of triggers.

2. We now have "trigger" warnings to warn people about potentially offensive or difficult topics.¹

3. **A large study by researchers at Harvard found that "trigger warnings reinforced the belief on the part of trauma survivors that trauma was central (rather than incidental or peripheral) to their identity. "**

E. Here is a danger of the modern trend for “trigger warnings” and the over awareness of trauma:

- a. We are not called to deny what we have felt, seen, heard, or experienced.
- b. But “trigger warnings” gives people permission to never address their pain and experiences with the love, joy, and peace of Jesus.

c. When we avoid certain situations and topics, we are fostering an environment where anger, hatred, and unforgiveness can live.

1. Our society does not know how to handle trauma.
2. Instead of encouraging people to forgive and heal, we keep the wounds fresh and the anger real with trigger warnings.
 1. We then self-medicate with alcohol, entertainment, sex, and marijuana.
 2. Could the increase in adolescent anxiety be linked to a culture that does not know how to biblically deal with conflict, trauma, and pain?
3. **Avoidance is not the answer to our hurts.**
4. **Forgiveness is the answer.**

F. The Apostle Paul understood what it meant to suffer and to endure trauma.

1. Yet, time and again, he would talk about those events in relation to his identity as a servant of Jesus.
2. Our culture is redefining identity:
 - a. Here is why many of you don’t understand what young people are going through:

1. For many of you, your generation was defined by wealth, career, and family.
 2. The builder generation "built".
- b. Today's generation, is seeking identity from two sources:
1. sexuality
 2. and trauma.
 - a. They've rejected the pursuit of wealth, because they have what they want.
 - b. We lack the shared "trauma" of the Great Depression and World War II.
 3. Even 9/11 is no longer a shared experienced for anyone 21 years or younger.
 4. But Sexuality and Trauma invite people to a cause that, they believe, will make them unique in this world.
- c. The problem with the trauma narrative is that:
- Unforgiveness leads us to place our pain at the center of our identity instead of Jesus.**
1. Why do you think that Critical Race Theory is so attractive?
 2. It offers ONE more option for people to find their identity in the "shared struggle" and trauma instead of Jesus.
 - a. This is nothing new: Hitler's book was called "My Struggle".
 - b. Could it be that if Satan cannot cause people to find their identity with wealth and

prosperity, then he will use trauma and anger to accomplish the same thing?

d. Once you've lived with anger and unforgiveness, eventually it becomes hard to live without it.

2. For some of us here today, your pain is recent.

a. Maybe you are in the midst of a situation where someone is presently committing sin against God and you.

b. And inside you find yourself more and more angry, bitter, resentful, and hurt.

3. You've prayed to forgive the person, but you aren't there yet.

a. Maybe you are afraid that if you forgive the person then they will be off the hook for what they have done.

b. But remember that, "Vengeance is mine says the Lord".

c. **It is not within your authority to bring vengeance but it is within your domain to bring forgiveness.**

Closing: There are people here today who need to practice forgiveness and who want to find peace.

A. How do I know I've forgiven someone?

1. "Bitterness is gone when there is no desire to get even with or punish the offender, when I do or say nothing that would hurt his reputation or future, and when I truly wish him well in all he seeks to do."⁴

B. Today, I'm believing for a mighty move of God in this place.

1. Today is the day for many of you to be forgiven.

⁴ R. T. Kendall

2. Today is the day that many of you forgive someone who has wronged you:

a. Even if that person is dead, you must forgive.

b. Even if that person is showing no remorse, forgive.

3. Many of us carry wounds that have not yet been fully and totally forgiven.

4. Our lives are not characterized by the ministry of the Holy Spirit nearly as much as it is characterized by sinful thoughts and emotions.

C. I am going to ask all of us who will to come to the front:

1. If you need forgiveness, confess your sin to God (and be specific.)

2. If you need to forgive someone, confess to God what they have done to you, how you feel about it, and then pray for help in forgiving them.

3. If you desire more of God's peace in your life, ask for it.

C. Today we pray not only for ourselves but for our families, community, and world.

1. How can others ever find peace and forgiveness if God's people don't understand it themselves?

2. Let us ask for the supernatural help and power of God.

ⁱ <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/what-if-trigger-warnings-dont-work#:~:text=Trigger%20warnings%20started%20to%20appear,post%2Dtraumatic%20stress%20disorder%2C%20o>
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