

RESOLUTION TOWARD THE LORD AND WITH EACH OTHER

Matthew 6:12: “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” We have arrived at the center of the model prayer. And it is most fitting that it should be the center. It is too easy to breeze quickly over this point. If we do not make resolution here, then we are in jeopardy of the rest of our prayer becoming null and void. This is the only part of the model prayer that has an addendum. Because after the “Amen,” the Lord Jesus said, “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14, 15).

In my youth I would often hear the men pray in church and begin with, “Lord, we come to you as humbly as we know how. And we ask you to forgive us our sins and wherein we have failed you.” If you think about it, at this point, few people are really dealing with sin; they are only going through the motions. I see the wisdom of our Lord in getting us to address the debts or trespasses in the middle of the prayer. I often remember how my wife reminded me years ago how important it is to clean the house in the daylight, when you can see what you’re doing. I see the sense of entering into the presence of our Lord in praise, followed with praying the kingdom of God to come and the will of God to be done. Then we ask God for our daily bread and our confidence of His goodness and provision is bolstered. You might say the “light” is on in our prayer time and it’s time to deal with our sins and our attitude toward others, while we can more easily recognize and see things from our Lord’s perspective.

Let us start with:

I. CONFESSION TO GOD

I John 1:9: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” We must deal first with our sin. There is an old saying, “Keep a short list between you and God.” My question is, why keep a list at all? We should confess our sin as soon as possible and be done with it. This is why everyday we should consider this part of prayer--to “keep the way clear, let nothing between” as the old hymn says. Years ago I read Warren Wiersbe pointing out the progression of not confessing our sins.

A. We lie to others (hypocrisy).

I John 1:6: “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.”

B. We lie to ourselves (duplicity).

I John 1:8: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

C. We lie to God and attempt to make Him out to be a liar (apostasy).

I John 1:10: “If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”

II. COMPASSION TO OTHERS

Matthew 6:12: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Notice the phrase, "...as we forgive our debtors." In other words, in the same way we forgive, we expect the same in return. If you take the attitude, "Well, I'll forgive you, but I want to have nothing else to do with you," have you really forgiven? If we are to be forgiven by God in that same way, can you imagine God saying, "Okay, I'll forgive you, but I want nothing else to do with you." That is, in fact, unimaginable.

Jesus could not have made it more clear when He said in Matthew 5:23, 24, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." The Lord is pointing out that our worship toward Him is hindered if it is not right with our brother or sister in Christ.

And look what we have to gain. Our Lord said in Matthew 18:15, "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." When you have taken the initiative to heal a broken relationship, you have gained a brother.

How do we forgive?

A. We understand that forgiveness is not earned.

Jesus said in Luke 23:34a, "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do...." No one was saying, "I am sorry" at the foot of the cross.

B. We forgive for Jesus' sake.

Colossians 3:13: "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Ephesians 4:32: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

C. We require no vengeance.

Romans 12:19: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Many times there is a half-hearted attempt at forgiving and receiving forgiveness. We say, "If I hurt your feelings, I want to apologize." Apologizing comes to us from the Greek word *apologia*, which means to make a defense. It is best to say, "Will you forgive me? I was wrong." And for those who come to you requesting forgiveness, you give it with no strings attached.

D. We choose to remember forgiven sins no longer.

Isaiah 43:25: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Hebrews 10:17: "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

The classic illustration is found in Matthew 18:1-35. The king in our parable is taking inventory and discovers that a servant owes him 10,00 talents. He could not pay it. The king forgave him the insurmountable debt. A talent was the largest measure known in the Roman world at that time. Dr. Adrian Rogers said, "One talent is equal to the income of one man for 17 years. This therefore, is equivalent to the income of 10,000 men for 17 years. In today's dollars, it would be billions of dollars. Sometimes the word is translated as myriads. It is as if to say the number is almost innumerable." This is the perfect example of what we owe the Lord because of our sin. We have fallen "...short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23b). Later, the servant finds a fellow servant who owed him one hundred pence, a mere 20 dollars in modern terms. And he would not forgive him the debt, but rather cast him in to prison. The king called the ungrateful servant back and severely rebuked him and delivered over to the tormentors. What a parable! To live apart from forgiveness and forgiving is to be tormented!

When we forgive, we are freeing two people: the person you forgave and yourself. You receive personal emancipation. You give brotherly reconciliation and in the Kingdom of God there is going to be spiritual jubilation! Comparing revival to a house renovation, it has been said, "Real revival is not just getting the roof off. It is taking the walls down!" In other words, revival has everything to do with being right with God and each other.

III. CONTROLLED TEMPERAMENT

This is a great time in the model prayer to do preventative maintenance. If we pray this prayer daily, we are dealing immediately and thoroughly with offence. Therefore, as a rule, we will be at peace with God and our fellow man before we start praying, should we maintain the practice of praying "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." It is at this time that we determine to control our anger and attitude and clear the air before the offense comes. And if the offense comes, we guard our response to it. These are the verses I like to claim: James 1:20; Psalm 141:3; Psalm 19:12-14; Psalm 119:165.

-Pastor Pope-