



DOVER DAILY DEVOTIONS

On Sunday we returned to the Lord's Prayer and listened closely to Jesus teach us to ask, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). We faced both the comfort and the searching edge of this petition, including Jesus' sober words in Matthew 6:14-15, and we learned to live as a confessing people who rest on Christ's finished work for forgiveness and who, by that same grace, are reshaped into a forgiving church.

Monday: Living Under the Fountain

Scripture Reading: Matthew 6:12

When we say "debts," we are not talking about minor mistakes. We are confessing sin. We owe God perfect love, trust, and obedience, and we have not paid what we owe. We have treated his name lightly, resisted his will, and loved our own way.

Yet Jesus teaches us to bring that debt to a loving Father. That is the miracle beneath the request. We are not bargaining with a Judge who might be persuaded. We are coming to the Father through the Son, asking for mercy that has been purchased by blood.

So this petition does not train us to wallow in shame. It trains us to live under the fountain of mercy. Not hiding, not pretending, not performing. Confessing plainly, trusting Christ fully, and receiving forgiveness with reverent gratitude.

1. What sin are you most tempted to keep vague, and what would it look like to name it plainly before God today?
2. When you feel guilty, do you move toward the Father through Christ, or do you withdraw and go silent?
3. What would change in your prayer life if you treated confession as living under mercy, not as being put on trial?

Prayer:

Father, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed. Forgive us for treating our sin lightly and your holiness casually. Thank you that you invite us to come near through Jesus Christ, our Advocate and Savior. Teach us to confess honestly and to trust the cleansing power of his blood. Keep us living under the fountain of your forgiving mercy. Amen.

Tuesday: No Condemnation, Real Communion

Scripture Reading: Romans 8:1

Some believers hesitate to ask for forgiveness because they fear it implies they are not truly saved. Others avoid confession because they assume it is unnecessary because God simply overlooks wrongdoing. Jesus corrects both errors by teaching us to confess as children who belong to the Father.

Romans 8:1 tells us that, in Christ, there is no condemnation. God's verdict over the believer is not revised every time we stumble. Justification by grace is not fragile, and it is not earned by the intensity of our regret.

And still, sin clouds fellowship. A child can belong to his father and yet live at a needless distance. Confession is not re-entering the courtroom. It is returning to the table. We confess because we are loved, and we do not want anything between our hearts and the Father's face.

This is why daily confession is a gift. It restores communion. It retrains the heart to hate what grieves the One we love. It leads us back, again and again, to Christ, whose finished work is the only foundation of forgiveness.

1. Do you treat confession as a way to earn God's favor, or as a way to enjoy fellowship with the Father?
2. Where are you living at a distance from God because you are hiding a sin rather than bringing it into the light?
3. What would it look like today to rest in "no condemnation" while still taking sin seriously?

Prayer:

Father, thank you that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Forgive us for doubting your settled verdict and for trying to manage our guilt in our own strength. Draw us back into close fellowship with you through honest confession. Teach us to hate what dishonors you and to love what pleases you. We rest our confidence not in ourselves, but in Jesus Christ the righteous. Amen.

Wednesday: Forgiveness Has a Cost

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:7

God does not forgive by overlooking guilt. He forgives by dealing with sin in a Substitute. That is why the gospel is holy, costly, and true.

Ephesians says we have redemption through Christ's blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses. Forgiveness is not God lowering his standards. It is God satisfying his justice through the obedient death of his Son. The cross is not an example only. It is the ground of our forgiveness.

This keeps confession honest. We do not varnish sin because God did not minimize it. We also do not despair because God has already provided what we cannot. Christ has done what we could never do. He has paid what we could never pay.

So we confess plainly and then we look away from ourselves. We trust the promise of God rather than feeding shame. The Father who gave his Son is not looking for reasons to refuse his children. He delights to forgive through the finished work of Christ.

1. When you think of God's forgiveness, do you feel it is cheap, or do you remember the blood that purchased it?
2. What specific shame have you been carrying that needs to be answered with the words, "In him we have redemption"?
3. How might your confession change if you believed God forgives on the basis of Christ, not the quality of your performance?

Prayer:

Holy Father, we praise you that your mercy is righteous and your forgiveness is costly. Forgive us for thinking lightly of sin and lightly of grace. Thank you for redeeming us through the blood of your Son and for cleansing us without compromise. Teach us to confess with honesty and to trust your promise with confidence. Keep our eyes fixed on Christ crucified and risen, our only hope. Amen.

Thursday: The Family Resemblance

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:8-10

Jesus ties together two realities that we often try to separate. We need forgiveness from God, and we must become a people who forgive others. That connection can tighten the conscience, but it is meant to clarify, not to confuse.

Scripture is clear that salvation is by grace through faith, not a result of works. God does not forgive us because we have forgiven well enough. He forgives us because Christ has died and risen, and we have received him by faith.

So what is Jesus doing when he says, "as we also have forgiven our debtors"? He is describing a family resemblance. Those who have been forgiven begin, however haltingly, to forgive. Not perfectly. Not instantly. But genuinely. Mercy received starts to reshape mercy given.

This petition is a warning to the hardened heart, but it is also a comfort to the tender one. If you are grieved by your lack of forgiveness and you want to change, that desire itself is not produced by the flesh. It is evidence of grace at work. Ask the Father to complete what he has begun.

1. Is there any person you have decided you will not forgive, even in your heart?
2. Where do you need to repent, not because you are trying to earn forgiveness, but because forgiveness has been given to you in Christ?
3. What would a first small step toward a forgiving posture look like this week, even if the relationship is not yet restored?

Prayer:

Father, thank you that we are saved by grace and not by our works. Forgive us for both presumption and hardness, for taking your mercy lightly and withholding mercy from others. Form in us the family likeness

of your Son, who forgave his enemies and bore our sins. Give us courage to repent where we have been clenched and stubborn. Teach us to forgive as those who have been forgiven. Amen.

Friday: A Confessing and Cleansed Church

Scripture Reading: Matthew 6:14–15

Jesus follows the Lord's Prayer with a sober word about forgiveness. He does it because he loves his people, and because a church can become skilled at religious speech while remaining unyielding in the heart.

A settled refusal to forgive is never a small matter. It is not merely a personality trait or a private preference. It exposes something spiritually rotten, because it contradicts the mercy we claim to have received. If we will not forgive, we should not soothe ourselves with spiritual language. We should repent.

This petition is not meant to stay private. It is meant to form a community. Worship and reconciliation belong together. Confession and the Lord's Table belong together. A church that hides sin profanes God's name, but a church that brings sin into the light and runs to the cross hallows it.

Imagine the quiet power of a congregation that keeps accounts short. A people who tell the truth in love, seek peace wisely, protect the vulnerable, and refuse the slow poison of bitterness. The world may not understand every doctrine we confess, but they would sense something clean in the air.

1. Is there a relationship in the church where you are singing loudly while your heart stays locked?
2. Where have you been excusing unforgiveness as "discernment" or "boundaries" when it is actually bitterness?
3. What step of repentance or reconciliation is the Lord pressing on you, and what has kept you from taking it?

Prayer:

Father, make us a confessing people who live in the light. Forgive us for the pride that hides sin and the hardness that refuses to forgive. Protect our church from hypocrisy and from the quiet divisions that grow in the dark. Teach us to pursue peace with wisdom and to extend mercy with sincerity. Form our life together by the cross of Christ, for your glory. Amen.

Saturday: When Forgiveness Feels Impossible

Scripture Reading: Luke 23:33–34

Some wounds are not small. Some betrayals change the texture of a life. Scripture does not ask you to pretend it did not hurt. Forgiveness is not amnesia, and it is not calling evil good.

Forgiveness is releasing vengeance into God's hands and refusing to live as a hostage to the past. It is a decision of obedience that often must be renewed, and it may require time, counsel, and patient wisdom about what reconciliation can and cannot look like.

When forgiveness feels impossible, begin with honesty. “Father, I want to want to forgive. Help me.” That is not a sophisticated prayer, but it is a true one. The Lord does not despise it.

Then look to Christ. From the cross he prayed, “Father, forgive them.” He is patient with slow steps, and he will not crush the bruised reed. But he will not leave his people chained to bitterness either. He loves us too much for that, and he has power to do what we cannot.

1. What injury are you still carrying like a stone you touch every day, and what has it been doing to your heart?
2. What would it mean for you to release vengeance to God, even if trust and closeness cannot be rebuilt quickly?
3. How can you take one honest step today toward forgiveness by returning to Christ’s cross and asking the Spirit for help?

Prayer:

Father, you know the wounds we carry and the anger we can hardly name. Forgive us for bitterness and for the desire to hold others hostage to their worst moments. Thank you for Jesus Christ, who prayed for sinners from the cross and who bore our debt in full. Help us to release vengeance into your hands and to walk in the freedom of your mercy. Do in us what we cannot do by willpower, and make us a forgiving people for the sake of your name. Amen.