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**Perfect Forgiveness by Zac Poonen - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2018/3/23 14:30**

The Bible says that we are justified by the blood of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:9). When God cleanses us He justifies us too. That word "justified" means, "Just as if I'd never sinned in my life and just as if I am perfectly righteous now." How wonderful! We can picture our sins like many words written on a blackboard. Now that board has been wiped clean with a wet cloth. When you look at the blackboard now what do you see? Nothing. It is just as if nothing had ever been written on it at any time. That is how the blood of Jesus cleanses us - thoroughly and completely.

If we have truly confessed our sins to God, then having confessed them once is enough. God blots them out immediately. And His promise is, "I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE" (Hebrews 8:12). What rest comes into our heart when we realize that we've been truly forgiven and that we don't have to confess our sins again and again to the Lord. Let me add that it is best when we pray "Forgive us our sins", to be specific. Many people pray in a general way, "Lord, I may have committed so many sins". That means they're not sure. It's no use confessing like that; because you're implying that perhaps you haven't sinned at all! It is best to be specific, and to say, "Lord, this is the sin. I've had a grudge against that person. I haven't forgiven that person. I've been jealous of that person. My motive in doing that was utterly selfish. I did it for my own glory, etc." You have to be honest. And after we have confessed all the sins that we know, we'll still have to pray like David, "Acquit me of hidden sins" - for we have all sinned in ways that we are not conscious of (Psalms 19:12).

This petition for forgiveness is one of the most important petitions in the Lord's Prayer because it is the only petition that Jesus repeated at the end of His prayer. Have you noticed that? Out of the six petitions in this prayer, Jesus emphasized one especially at the end. He said, "If you forgive men their trespasses your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses your Heavenly Father will also not forgive you" (Matthew 6:14, 15). Many Christians do not enjoy full and free fellowship with God because they have not taken this petition seriously.

Jesus taught a parable of a king who checked up the accounts of his servants one day and discovered that there was one who owed him 40 million rupees. And when that servant said, "I've got no money sir, please forgive me," the king forgave him completely. That man went out, and found another servant who owed him just 40 rupees; and he caught him by the throat and sued him and put him in jail. When the king heard that, he called the unmerciful servant and said, "I forgive you 40 million rupees so freely. Couldn't you forgive that man 40 rupees?" And he handed him over to the torturers. Then Jesus said, "So will My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart" (Matthew 18:35). The torturers are evil spirits who are permitted to harass us until we learn to be merciful to others. Jesus used this parable to illustrate how great the debt is that God has forgiven us, and how unmerciful and evil it is for us not to forgive someone who has hurt us.

Has someone done you some harm? Maybe someone has spread false stories about you. Maybe your neighbour, or your wife, or your father or your mother-in-law has done you some harm. Maybe they have ruined your life in some way. Maybe the doctor who operated on you made a mistake that has caused you untold suffering. But the Lord says that all those sins put together are so tiny compared to the debt you had to God and which God forgave you. So there is absolutely no reason why you should not be able to forgive all those people freely from your heart. The important part of Matthew 18:35 is "from your heart". If you are not willing to forgive your fellow-man from your heart, don't waste your time coming to God and saying, "Forgive us our trespasses," for God won't listen to your prayer. If there is one single soul in the whole world whom you haven't forgiven, you cannot be forgiven yourself; and you'll be lost eternally - for no unforgiven soul can ever enter God's presence. This is far more serious than we realise.

The prayer is, "Forgive us AS WE HAVE forgiven others." God sees exactly how we have forgiven others. Jesus taught that God gives us in the SAME measure as we give to others. He said, "Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down and shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For BY YOUR STANDARD OF MEASURE IT WILL BE MEASURED TO YOU IN RETURN" (Luke 6:38). That means that if you use a small spoon to give to others, God will use that very same spoon when answering your prayers. So when we pray for something great and mighty from God and God takes a small spoon and gives us only a little bit, the reason usually is that we have used that same spoon to give to others. The larger the spoon we use to give to others, the larger the spoon God will use to give to us. This is an unchanging principle in God's dealings with us.

"Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy" (Matthew 5:7). The more merciful you are to others, the more

ore merciful God will be to you in the day of judgment. But "judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy" (James 2:13). And so, if you forgive others in a mean, stingy way, God will forgive you in the same way too. But if you give those who have harmed you a warm, forgiving look, God will give you a warm, forgiving look too. God will treat you exactly as you treat others.

Jesus said that when you bring your gifts to the altar, when you come to pray to God, or to put money into the offering box, and there remember that you've hurt your brother, you should, "FIRST be reconciled to your brother and then come and present your offering" (Matthew 5:22-24). Otherwise God won't accept your money or your prayer. The Old Covenant standard was just: "YOU shall not bear any grudge against your neighbour" (Leviticus 19:18). That was easy to keep. But the New Covenant standard is higher. Jesus said, "If YOUR BROTHER has a grudge against you, go and set it right". Of course, there will always be brothers who have something against us for no fault of ours. Jesus and the apostles had many enemies because they stood for the truth. But here, in the context, Jesus is referring to a brother who has a grudge against us because WE spoke to him rudely (Matthew 5:22). It's a grudge caused by something sinful that WE did. In such cases, we must go to him first, confessing our sin and asking him for forgiveness. Only then can we bring our offering to God.

If we go to God and say, "Lord, I want the fullness of new-covenant power in my life", the Lord will say, "When I give you new-covenant power, it will bring with it new-covenant responsibilities." Many Christians do not enjoy new-covenant power, because they are living by old covenant standards. They remain powerless because they are unwilling to go and ask for forgiveness from someone. We all have a flesh and we are living among others who have a flesh. And so we are constantly liable to injure one another knowingly and unknowingly. The only place where we'll never get hurt by anyone is in heaven. And so we need to forgive one another as long as we live on this earth. To err is human, to forgive is divine.

One of the features of hell is that there is no mercy there. And in the measure in which you lack mercy in your heart towards others, in that measure you have got a little bit of hell right inside your heart. If you are unwilling to forgive someone, you've got a little bit of hell inside you. You may be considered very pious by others, because of all your religious activity. But you've got this little bit of hell right inside you all the time. And you can't go to heaven in that condition - because you can't take hell into heaven. You've got to get rid of it before you leave this earth. That's why the Lord taught us to pray, "Forgive us in exactly the same way that we have forgiven others". When we don't forgive others, it can affect our bodies too. Disobedience to God's laws often brings physical suffering.

If you bear a grudge against someone in your heart or if you're jealous of someone, and thus violate God's law of love, it can finally begin to affect your body. There are Christians today suffering from arthritis, migraine, rheumatism and asthma etc., who can't be healed - just because they have a grudge against someone. They may take any number of pills but they're not going to be healed until they learn to forgive. The cause of such diseases is not organic. It's not in their body. It is in their soul.

If you have not forgiven your brother or sister, God will not listen to your prayer. The Bible says in Psalm 66:18: "If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear". It's not only that He doesn't answer, he doesn't even HEAR. Let's not fool ourselves. True forgiveness follows brokenness and confession, and that involves a recognition of the rottenness of our flesh, a willingness to make any restitution and to ask anyone's forgiveness if necessary, if only our relationship with God can be straightened out.

Finally, remember that the petition is "Forgive US". We want our brothers to be forgiven too. Sometimes, it's possible to have a secret hope that a brother will be judged by God for the way he has treated us. Such an attitude is Satanic - for it's only the devil who wants people to be punished by God. Jesus said, "I have washed your feet and you must wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). That means that when you see dirt on your brother's feet (spiritually speaking), you must long for him to be cleansed too.

"Forgive US" means, Father, I won't be satisfied if you just forgive me my sins. There are other brothers and sisters around me. I want you to forgive them their sins too. Amen.