



CHRISTIAN CRUSADERS

7401 UNIVERSITY AVE., CEDAR FALLS, IOWA 50613
(319) 277-0924

INFO@CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG

WWW.CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG

Prayer is Penitent, Part 2

Luke 9:51-56, 22:39-46

When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" But he turned and rebuked them. And they went on to another village.

-
And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

If you're here today and you've ever battled with the challenge of releasing offenses that you've experienced, or the granting of forgiveness in your life toward yourself or others, or maybe even toward God, this time today is for you.

Of all the things in the human heart that wreak havoc on our world, when you think of what the Bible says about the human heart and the love of money being the root of all kinds of evil, or the lust for power being something that tramples other people in its process, or the selfish lusts of the flesh being something that caused wounds to other people, near the top of the list with those three biggies has to also be what we might call the scourge of unforgiveness and the fruits of unforgiveness that come out of a heart, the fruits of resentment or bitterness, grumbling, the desire for revenge.

If you have ever battled with unforgiveness, you know what a challenge it can be, how debilitating it can be. Unforgiveness eats away at the very fabric of our humanity. It eats away at our spirit, our soul, and even our flesh. It keeps us stuck in the past. It can hinder the flow of God's grace in the present and can keep us from reaching God's full potential for us in our lives.

If we are housing unforgiveness in our hearts, our lives shrink down. We start to focus on something in the past and we miss things in the present. We become idolatrous of the negative that we've experienced, and we start to live in a smaller and smaller world, and we miss all of the potential around us.

Now, if you're battling with unforgiveness, as all of us do from time to time, I want you to know three things this morning.

Number one, I want you to know that you're not alone. You're not alone. There is a lot of hostility in our world today. People taking offense on every front. Harboring anger and rage and bitterness and pursuing justice and vengeance on their own. It's all around us. And Jesus said it would be. He said in every gospel account we have record of Jesus saying, in this world we're going to face unfair betrayals, mistreatments, tribulations, offenses, troubles would come into our lives. Hurts will come into our lives. They will come again and again and again.

And as a matter of fact, there's evidence in the scriptures that if you name the name of Jesus, you might just experience more of those things rather than less. You might encounter more of them at one level or another. God has said, in a fallen world, you're going to take hurts. You're going to be mistreated. You're going to suffer pain at the hands of others.

Consider Joseph. If you're having trouble forgiving, consider this young man in the Old Testament whose brothers didn't like him. He's very kin. Didn't like him. He was his father's favored son. Gave him a special coat. It nauseated his brothers.

They were so annoyed by him. One day when he showed up around them, they threw him in a pit and were debating whether or not to kill him, and one brother spoke up and said, let's not kill him. And there was a caravan going by at this time. They said, let's sell him to the caravan. And so they were in Israel at this time, and they sold their brother to a caravan of people going to Egypt. And so off went Joseph to Egypt, disowned by his own family.

And he got to Egypt and God was with him. The Bible says he wasn't harboring. I'm sure he was struggling, but he wasn't harboring hard heartedness against his brothers. And he sort of escalated and became a right hand man of a man named Potiphar. And then he was falsely accused of Potiphar's wife and thrown in jail for numerous years. An innocent man in jail, unjustly treated.

And then one day a king had a dream. The Pharaoh in Egypt. And God gave Joseph the power to interpret the dream. And Joseph was brought to be the second hand leader in Egypt. And the dream said, there's going to be a famine all around in the land for seven years. You're going to have plenty, and then seven years there's going to be a famine. And the king said to Joseph, why don't you help me prepare for the famine? And Joseph helped prepare all of Egypt for this coming famine because he was available to God, and the grace of God was flowing him. He wasn't harboring bitterness and resentment.

And two years into the famine, the Israelites were suffering so much that Joseph's brothers came to Egypt. And they came before him. And Joseph recognized them. And there were his offenders right in front of him, his own kin who sold him.

Genesis 42 verse 24 says this. When Joseph saw them, he turned away from them and began to weep. It hurt him. Deep pain. Forgiveness is not ignoring the pains that we've experienced. As a matter of fact, you can't hardly be fully cleansed from the offense until you experience the full pain of it before God.

He turned away from them and began to weep. He didn't really trust them at this point, so he tested them a little. You can read about it in Genesis 42. And they passed the test.

And later, a few years down the road, 10 to 12 years later, after their father Jacob passed away, they went to bury him. And then the brothers of Joseph got nervous again. Now, what is Joseph going to do to us in retribution for what we did to him in the past, in his authoritative position? What's he going to do?

And so they schemed together. Genesis chapter 50. When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, what if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back now for all the wrongs we did to him? So they sent word to Joseph, saying, your father left these instructions before he died.

This is what you are to say to Joseph: "I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly. Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." And the Bible says this 10 to 12 years later after his first encounter with him.

When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

Know that you're not alone if you've taken a lot of hurts in life, and also know that forgiveness, full forgiveness, and healing can take a long time to process.

When their message came to him, Joseph wept again. His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him and said, "We are your slaves."

But Joseph said to him, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good, to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So don't be afraid. I will take care of you and your family." And he spoke kindly to his offenders.

Forgiveness. If you're struggling with hurts and heartache and anger, desire for revenge, as is so prominent in our world today—whether it's with a family member, a coworker, some friend, some political leader—friend, I want to encourage you: if you will take steps to release it... release it... God will honor you. He will honor your steps.

Joseph didn't get stuck in his journey because of unforgiveness. He kept moving forward in faith and trust in God, and God took all of the things that happened to him and worked them for good, and he will do the same, he promises, for anyone who loves him and walks in the callings that he's given us.

We're now moving toward celebrating the forgiveness that God has offered us. I want to speak to you a little bit about that before we celebrate communion.

God is talking to us about our fellowship with him—our walk with him and our talk with him. And he said, when you pray, pray like this. He said, “Father, forgive us as we forgive others.”

King Solomon said this: Proverbs 4:23. “Above all else in your life, above all else, all the things that we're doing, all the activities we're involved in, all the ambitions, all the strivings,” he said, “Guard your heart, for out of it flows everything.” Your whole life flows out of your heart.

Jesus said this, Matthew chapter five: if you're coming to the altar, as we're going to do here in a moment, as you're coming to the altar to worship God and come before him with the gift of yourself, and you remember that you have an issue that's unresolved with someone else—if you know that in your heart—Jesus said, first go take care of that before you come.

Communion here is open to everyone who is a follower of Jesus. But there are these teachings in the Bible that say even if you're a follower of Jesus, if something's wrong in your relationships in the world, you have some business to do before you come to the table, to the altar.

First Corinthians chapter 11. The Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes this: “Whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.”

Communion is, in the spiritual realm, a very significant activity. We are celebrating the forgiveness of God for us. And if we are like the wicked servant, and we are not passing that forgiveness on to others, God says, check your heart. Do some work there before you come. Don't be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.

Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.

It would be wrong of me as a spiritual leader not to teach this. And as we come to the communion table again this month—and every time you do it—it's a time for searching our hearts and asking God, is there something we need to deal with before we come to you?

I'll just close by saying the reason Jesus came into the world, his very first pronouncement of his ministry, was that he came to set captives free, to bind up broken and hurting hearts, to release the oppressed, and to proclaim the time of God's favor.

If you need some freeing before him today, friend, you can ask him. Ask him to search your heart and bring to the surface anything that is hurtful in you, and bring it before him so you can come to the table with a clean conscience.

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for your word, which teaches us so clearly about your ways in the world. We thank you for the gift of forgiveness that you've offered us, and we definitely do not want to stop that flow. We want to be able to continually walk in the freedom of your spirit, the flow of your spirit.

So as we prepare to come to the communion table this morning, I ask that you would search our hearts, Father. Help us see if there is any hurtful way in us, and then lead us in the way of life.

Father, if there are some here who are dealing with deep resentments, deep unforgiveness, rage and anger towards someone or some situation or circumstance in our world, help them see the loving instruction that you've given, and invite them into the process of releasing this to you so that you, the perfect and just and fair God, can step in and handle our affairs and our hurts.

We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.