



Forgiveness,
the Proof
of Salvation

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Forward

We all need ongoing cleansing, moment by moment. Thank God he provides forgiveness by his mercy when we ask for it.

Make confession and repentance a regular part of your talks with God. Rely on him moment by moment for the cleansing you need

When we are wronged, often our first reaction is to get even. Instead Jesus said we should do *well* to those who wrong us!

Our desire should not be to keep score, but to love and forgive. This is not natural—it is supernatural. Only God can give us the strength to love as he does. Instead of planning vengeance, pray for those who hurt you.

Jesus gives a startling warning about forgiveness: if we refuse to forgive others, God will also refuse to forgive us. Why? Because when we don't forgive others, we are denying our common ground as sinners in need of God's forgiveness.

It is easy to ask God for forgiveness, but difficult to grant it to others. Whenever we ask God to forgive us for sin, we should ask ourselves, "Have I forgiven the people who have wronged me?"

Determine today to live a life of giving and receiving forgiveness.

Chapter 1

God forgives the sins of the Israelites

Numbers 14:19-21

In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now."

The LORD replied, "I have forgiven them, as you asked. Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth,

The people of Israel had a clearer view of God than any people before them, for they had both his laws and his physical presence.

Their refusal to follow God after witnessing his miraculous deeds and listening to his words made the judgment against them more severe. Increased opportunity brings increased responsibility. As Jesus said: "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded" (Luke 12:48).

How much greater is our responsibility to obey and serve God—we have the whole Bible, and we know God's Son, Jesus Christ.

Forgiveness does not pay back for being wronged.

Proverbs 20:22

Do not say, "I'll pay you back for this wrong!" Wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you.

No one is without sin. As soon as we confess our sin and repent, sinful thoughts and actions begin to creep back into our lives. We all need ongoing cleansing, moment by moment. Thank God he provides forgiveness by his mercy when we ask for it. Make confession and repentance a regular part of your talks with God. Rely on him moment by moment for the cleansing you need.

God forgives and shows compassion

Micah 7:18

Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

God delights to show mercy! He does not forgive grudgingly, but is glad when we repent and offers forgiveness to all who come back to him. Today you can confess your sins and receive his loving forgiveness. Don't be too proud to accept God's free offer.

Forgive before offering a gift to God.

Matthew 5:24

Leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

Broken relationships can hinder our relationship with God. If we have a problem or grievance with a friend, we should resolve the problem as soon as possible.

We are hypocrites if we claim to love God while we hate others. Our attitudes toward others reflect our relationship with God (1 John 4:20).

Forgive and pray for those who persecute you

Matthew 5:44-45

But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

God's purpose behind this law was an expression of mercy. The law was given to judges and said, in effect, "Make the punishment fit the crime." It was not a guide for personal revenge (Exodus 21:23-25; Leviticus 24:19-20; Deut. 19:21). These laws were given to *limit* vengeance and help the court administer punishment that was neither too strict nor too lenient. Some people, however, were using this phrase to justify their vendettas against others. People still try to excuse their acts of revenge by saying, "I was just doing to him what he did to me."

When we are wronged, often our first reaction is to get even. Instead Jesus said we should do *well* to those who wrong us! Our desire should not be to keep score, but to love and forgive. This is not natural—it is supernatural. Only God can give us the strength to love as he does. Instead of planning vengeance, pray for those who hurt you.

To many Jews of Jesus' day, these statements were offensive. Any Messiah who would turn the other cheek was not the military leader they wanted to lead a revolt against Rome. Since they were under Roman oppression, they wanted retaliation against their enemies, whom they hated.

But Jesus suggested a new, radical response to injustice: instead of demanding rights, give them up freely! According to Jesus, it is more important to *give* justice and mercy than to receive it.

By telling us not to retaliate, Jesus keeps us from taking the law into our own hands. By loving and praying for our enemies, we can overcome evil with good.

The Pharisees interpreted Leviticus 19:18 as teaching that they should love only those who love in return, and Psalm 139:19-22 and Psalm 140:9-11 as meaning that they should hate their enemies.

But Jesus says we are to love our enemies. If you love your enemies and treat them well, you will truly show that Jesus is Lord of your life.

This is possible only for those who give themselves fully to God, because only he can deliver people from natural selfishness. We must trust the Holy Spirit to help us *show* love to those for whom we may not *feel* love.

Chapter 2

If we forgive, we will be forgiven

Matthew 6:9-15

This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

This is often called the Lord's Prayer because Jesus gave it to the disciples. It can be a pattern for our prayers. We should praise God, pray for his work in the world, pray for our daily needs, and pray for help in our daily struggles.

The phrase "Our Father in heaven" indicates that God is not only majestic and holy, but also personal and loving. The first line of this model prayer is a statement of praise and a commitment to hallow, or honor, God's holy name. We can honor God's name by being careful to use it respectfully. If we use God's name lightly, we aren't remembering God's holiness.

The phrase “Your kingdom come” is a reference to God’s spiritual reign, not Israel’s freedom from Rome. God’s kingdom was announced in the covenant with Abraham (Matthew 8:11; Luke 13:28), is present in Christ’s reign in believers’ hearts (Luke 17:21), and will be complete when all evil is destroyed and God establishes the new heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1).

When we pray “Your will be done,” we are not resigning ourselves to fate, but praying that God’s perfect purpose will be accomplished in this world as well as in the next.

When we pray “Give us today our daily bread,” we are acknowledging that God is our sustainer and provider. It is a misconception to think that we provide for our needs ourselves. We must trust God *daily* to provide what he knows we need.

God doesn’t lead us into temptations, but sometimes he allows us to be tested by them.

As disciples, we should pray to be delivered from these trying times and for deliverance from Satan (“the evil one”) and his deceit.

All Christians struggle with temptation. Sometimes it is so subtle that we don’t even realize what is happening to us. God has promised that he won’t allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear (1 Cor. 10:13).

Ask God to help you recognize temptation and to give you strength to overcome it and choose God’s way instead.

Jesus gives a startling warning about forgiveness: if we refuse to forgive others, God will also refuse to forgive us. Why? Because when we don’t forgive others, we are denying our common ground as sinners in need of God’s forgiveness. God’s forgiveness of sin is not the direct result of our forgiving others, but it is based on our realizing what forgiveness means (see Ephes. 4:32). It is easy to ask God for forgiveness, but difficult to

grant it to others. Whenever we ask God to forgive us for sin, we should ask ourselves, "Have I forgiven the people who have wronged me?"

Continue to forgive

Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"

Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.

As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

"But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denari. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

"His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.

When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you

have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'

In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

The blood of Jesus was poured out for the forgiveness of sins

The rabbis taught that people should forgive those who offend them—but only three times. Peter, trying to be especially generous, asked Jesus if seven (the “perfect” number) was enough times to forgive someone.

But Jesus answered, “Seventy-seven times,” meaning that we shouldn’t even keep track of how many times we forgive someone. We should always forgive those who are truly repentant, no matter how many times they ask.

In Bible times, serious consequences awaited those who could not pay their debts. A person lending money could seize the borrower who couldn’t pay and force him or his family to work until the debt was paid. The debtor could also be thrown into prison, or his family could be sold into slavery to help pay off the debt. It was hoped that the debtor, while in prison, would sell off his landholdings or that relatives would pay the debt. If not, the debtor could remain in prison for life.

Because God has forgiven all our sins, we should not withhold forgiveness from others. Realizing how completely Christ has forgiven us should produce a free and generous attitude of forgiveness toward others. When we don’t forgive others, we are setting ourselves outside and above Christ’s law of love.

Chapter 3

Forgiven through the blood of the covenant

Matthew 26:28

This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

How does Jesus' blood relate to the new covenant? People under the old covenant (those who lived before Jesus) could approach God only through a priest and an animal sacrifice. Now all people can come directly to God through faith because Jesus' death has made us acceptable in God's eyes (Romans 3:21-24).

The old covenant was a shadow of the new (Jeremiah 31:31; Hebrews 8:1ff), pointing forward to the day when Jesus himself would be the final and ultimate sacrifice for sin. Rather than an unblemished lamb slain on the altar, the perfect Lamb of God was slain on the cross, a sinless sacrifice so that our sins could be forgiven once and for all.

All those who believe in Christ receive that forgiveness.

A heart of faith will receive healing

Mark 2:5

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Before saying to the paralytic, "Get up," Jesus said, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

To the Jewish leaders this statement was blasphemous, claiming to do something only God could do. According to the law, the punishment for this sin was death (Leviticus 24:15-16).

The religious leaders understood correctly that Jesus was claiming divine prerogatives, but their judgment of him was wrong. Jesus was not blaspheming because his claim was true.

Jesus is God, and he proved his claim by healing the paralytic (Mark 2:9-12).

Prayer without forgiveness is vain.

Mark 11:25

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.

Jesus, our example for prayer, prayed, “Everything is possible for you. Yet not what I will, but what you will” (Mark 14:36).

Our prayers are often motivated by our own interests and desires. We like to hear that we can have anything. But Jesus prayed with *God’s* interests in mind. When we pray, we should express our desires, but want his will above ours. Check yourself to see if your prayers focus on your interests or God’s.

It is not hypocrisy to be weak in faith. A hypocrite is a person who puts on religious behavior in order to gain attention, approval, acceptance, or admiration from others.

Chapter 4

Be Merciful, even as God is merciful.

Luke 6:35-38; 42

But love your enemies, do well to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back.

Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged.

Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.

Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

Give, and it will be given to you.

A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap.

For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye?

You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

Love means action. One-way to put love to work is to take the initiative in meeting specific needs. This is easy to do with people who love us, people whom we trust; but love means doing this even to those who dislike us or plan to hurt us. The money we give others should be considered a gift, not

a high-interest loan that will help us more than them. Give as though you are giving to God.

A forgiving spirit demonstrates that a person has received God's forgiveness. Jesus uses the picture of measuring grain in a basket to ensure the full amount. If we are critical rather than compassionate, we will also receive criticism. If we treat others generously, graciously, and compassionately, however, these qualities will come back to us in full measure. We are to love others, not judge them.

We should not be so afraid of the label *hypocrite* that we stand still in our Christian life, hiding our faith and making no attempts to grow.

A person who tries to do right but often fails is not a hypocrite. Neither are those who fulfill their duty even when they don't feel like doing it—it is often necessary and good to set aside our desires in order to do what needs doing.

He who has been forgiven little loves little.

Luke 7:47-48

Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.” Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

Overflowing love is the natural response to forgiveness and the appropriate consequence of faith. But only those who realize the depth of their sin can appreciate the complete forgiveness God offers them.

Jesus has rescued all of his followers, whether they were once extremely wicked or conventionally good, from eternal death.

Do you appreciate the wideness of God's mercy? Are you grateful for his forgiveness?

Jesus forgave those who crucified him.

Luke 23:34

Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

Jesus asked God to forgive the people who were putting him to death—Jewish leaders, Roman politicians and soldiers, bystanders—and God answered that prayer by opening up the way of salvation even to Jesus’ murderers. The Roman centurion and soldiers who witnessed the crucifixion said, “Surely he was the Son of God” (Matthew 27:54).

Soon many priests were converted to the Christian faith (Acts 6:7).

Because we are all sinners, we all played a part in putting Jesus to death. The gospel—the Good News—is that God is gracious. He will forgive us and give us new life through his Son.

Roman soldiers customarily divided up the clothing of executed criminals among themselves. When they cast lots for Jesus’ clothes, they fulfilled the prophecy in Psalm 22:18.

Chapter 5

Repentance and forgiveness will be preached in the entire world.

Luke 24:46-47

He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

The Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms is a way to describe the entire Old Testament. In other words, the entire Old Testament points to the Messiah.

For example, his role as prophet was foretold in Deut. 18:15-20; his sufferings were prophesied in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53; his resurrection was predicted in Psalm 16:9-11 and Isaiah 53:10-11.

Jesus opened these people's minds to understand the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit does this in our lives today when we study the Bible.

Have you ever wondered how to understand a difficult Bible passage? Besides reading surrounding passages, asking other people, and consulting reference works, pray that the Holy Spirit will open your mind to understand, giving you the needed insight to put God's Word into action in your life.

Luke wrote to the Greek-speaking world. He wanted them to know that Christ's message of God's love and forgiveness should go to the entire world. We must never ignore the worldwide scope of Christ's gospel. God wants the entire world to hear the Good News of salvation.

When you do not forgive, you are not forgiven

John 20:22-23

And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

This may have been a special filling of the Holy Spirit for the disciples, a foretaste of what all believers would experience from the time of Pentecost (Acts 2) and forever after. To do God's work, we need the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. We must avoid trying to do his work in our own strength.

There is life in the breath of God. Man was created but did not come alive until God breathed into him the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). God's first breath made man different from all other forms of creation.

Now, through the breath of Jesus, God imparted eternal, spiritual life. With this inbreathing came the power to do God's will on earth.

Jesus was giving the disciples their Spirit-powered and Spirit-guided mission—to preach the Good News about Jesus so people's sins might be forgiven.

The disciples did not have the power to forgive sins (only God can forgive sins), but Jesus gave them the privilege of telling new believers that their sins *have been* forgiven because they have accepted Jesus' message (see the notes on +Matthew 16:19 and +Matthew 18:18).

All believers have this same privilege. We can announce the forgiveness of sin with certainty when we ourselves find repentance and faith.

Chapter 6

When forgiven, be baptized.

Acts 2:38

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

If you want to follow Christ, you must “repent and be baptized.” To repent means to *turn from* sin, changing the direction of your life from selfishness and rebellion against God’s laws. At the same time, you must *turn to* Christ, depending on him for forgiveness, mercy, guidance, and purpose. We cannot save ourselves—only God can save us. Baptism identifies us with Christ and with the community of believers. It is a condition of discipleship and a sign of faith.

All who believe in Christ will be forgiven.

Acts 10:43

All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

Peter’s brief and powerful sermon contains a concise statement of the gospel: Jesus’ perfect life of servanthood; his death on the cross; his resurrection, personally witnessed and experienced by Peter; Jesus’ fulfillment of the Scriptures; and the necessity of personal faith in him.

A sermon or witness for Christ does not need to be long to be effective. It should be Spirit-led and should center on Christ, the way and the truth and the life.

Two examples of prophets testifying about Jesus and his forgiveness of sins are Isaiah 52:13-53:12 and Ezekiel 36:25-26.

Receive the forgiveness of sins

Acts 26:17-18

I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles.

I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Paul took every opportunity to remind his audience that the Gentiles have an equal share in God's inheritance. This inheritance is the promise and blessing of the covenant that God made with Abraham (see Ephes. 2:19; 1 Peter 1:3-4). Paul's mission was to preach the Good News to the Gentiles.

Chapter 7

Forgiveness through the blood of Christ

Ephesians 1:7

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

To speak of Jesus' blood was an important first-century way of speaking of Christ's death. His death points to two wonderful truths. They are redemption and forgiveness.

Redemption was the price paid to gain freedom for a slave (Leviticus 25:47-54). Through his death, Jesus paid the price to release us from slavery to sin. *Forgiveness* was granted in Old Testament times on the basis of the shedding of animals' blood (Leviticus 17:11).

Now we are forgiven on the basis of the shedding of Jesus' blood—he died as the perfect and final sacrifice. (See also Romans 5:9; Ephes. 2:13; Col. 1:20; Hebrews 9:22; 1 Peter 1:19.)

Grace is God's voluntary and loving favor given to those he saves. We can't earn salvation, nor do we deserve it. No religious, intellectual, or moral effort can gain it, because it comes only from God's mercy and love.

Without God's grace, no person can be saved. To receive it, we must acknowledge that we cannot save ourselves, that only God can save us, and that our only way to receive this loving favor is through faith in Christ.

Rescued from the dominion of darkness

Colossians 1:13

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,

Paul lists five benefits God gives all believers through Christ:

- (1) He made us qualified to share his inheritance (see also 2 Cor. 5:21);
- (2) He rescued us from Satan's dominion of darkness and made us his children (see also Col. 2:15);
- (3) He brought us into his eternal kingdom (see also Ephes. 1:5-6);
- (4) He redeemed us—bought our freedom from sin and judgment (see also Hebrews 9:12); and
- (5) He forgave all our sins (see also Ephes. 1:7). Thank God for what you have received in Christ.

The Colossians feared the unseen forces of darkness, but Paul says that true believers have been transferred from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom, from guilt to forgiveness, and from the power of Satan to the power of God.

We have been rescued from a rebel kingdom to serve the rightful King. Our conduct should reflect our new allegiance.

Chapter 8

Forgive every grievance

Colossians 3:13

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

The key to forgiving others is remembering how much God has forgiven you. Is it difficult for you to forgive someone who has wronged you a little when God has forgiven you so much? Realizing God's infinite love and forgiveness can help you love and forgive others.

Forgiveness brings maturity in Christ

Hebrews 6:1-3

Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so.

Certain elementary teachings are essential for all believers to understand.

Those basics include the importance of faith,

The foolishness of trying to be saved by good deeds,

The meaning of baptism and spiritual gifts, and

The facts of resurrection and eternal life.

To go on to maturity in our understanding, we need to move beyond (but not away from) the elementary teachings to a more complete understanding of the faith. And this is what the author intends for them to do (Hebrews 6:3).

Mature Christians should be teaching new Christians the basics. Then, acting on what they know, the mature will learn even more from God's Word.

These Christians needed to move beyond the basics of their faith to an understanding of Christ as the perfect high priest and the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies. Rather than arguing about the respective merits of Judaism and Christianity, they needed to depend on Christ and live effectively for him.

God will remember our sins no more.

Hebrews 10:16-23

This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.

"Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.

"And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty

conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

The writer concludes his argument with this powerful statement that God will remember our sins no more. Christ forgives completely, so there is no need to confess our past sins repeatedly. As believers, we can be confident that the sins we confess and renounce are forgiven and forgotten.

Living by faith is far better than merely fulfilling rituals and rules. This can challenge us to grow in faith and to live in obedience to God each day.

The Most Holy Place in the temple was sealed from view by a curtain (Hebrews 10:20). Only the high priest could enter this holy room, and he did so only once a year on the Day of Atonement when he offered the sacrifice for the nation's sins.

But Jesus' death removed the curtain, and all believers may walk into God's presence at any time (see also Hebrews 6:19-20).

We have significant privileges associated with our new life in Christ:

- (1) We have personal access to God through Christ and can draw near to him without an elaborate system (Hebrews 10:22);
- (2) We may grow in faith, overcome doubts and questions, and deepen our relationship with God (Hebrews 10:23);
- (3) We may enjoy encouragement from one another (Hebrews 10:24);
- (4) We may worship together (Hebrews 10:25).

Chapter 9

Confess your sins and be healed.

James 5:16

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Christ has made it possible for us to go directly to God for forgiveness.

But confessing our sins to each other still has an important place in the life of the church.

- (1) If we have sinned against an individual, we must ask him or her to forgive us.
- (2) If our sin has affected the church, we must confess it publicly.
- (3) If we need loving support as we struggle with a sin, we should confess that sin to those who are able to provide that support.
- (4) If, after confessing a private sin to God, we still don't feel his forgiveness,

We may wish to confess that sin to a fellow believer and hear him or her assure us of God's pardon. In Christ's kingdom, every believer is a priest to other believers (1 Peter 2:9).

The Christian's most powerful resource is communion with God through prayer. The results are often greater than we thought were possible. Some people see prayer as a last resort to be tried when all else fails.

This approach is backward. Prayer should come first. Because God's power is infinitely greater than ours, it only makes sense to rely on it—especially because God encourages us to do so.

Walk in the light and have fellowship

1 John 1:4

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

John writes about having fellowship with other believers.

There are three principles behind true Christian fellowship.

First, our fellowship is grounded in the testimony of God's Word. Without this underlying strength, togetherness is impossible.

Second, it is mutual, depending on the unity of believers.

Third, it is renewed daily through the Holy Spirit. True fellowship combines social and spiritual interaction, and it is made possible only through a living relationship with Christ.

If we confess our sins, we will be forgiven

1 John 1:9-10

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives

The false teachers not only denied that sin breaks our fellowship with God (1 John 1:6) and that they had a sinful nature (1 John 1:8), but they also denied that their conduct involved any sin at all (1 John 1:10).

That was a lie that ignored one basic truth: all people are sinners by nature and by practice. At conversion all our sins are forgiven—past, present, and future.

Yet even after we become Christians, we still sin and still need to confess. This kind of confession is not offered to gain God's acceptance, but to remove the barrier to fellowship that our sin has put between him and us.

It is difficult, however, for many people to admit their faults and shortcomings, even to God. It takes humility and honesty to recognize our weaknesses, and most of us would rather pretend that we are strong.

But we need not fear revealing our sins to God—he knows them already. He will not push us away, no matter what we've done. Instead he will draw us to himself.

Confession will free us to enjoy fellowship with Christ. It should ease our consciences and lighten our cares. But some Christians do not understand how it works.

They feel so guilty that they confess the same sins over and over; then they wonder if they might have forgotten something. Other Christians believe that God forgives them when they confess, but if they died with unconfessed sins, they would be forever lost.

These Christians do not understand that God *wants* to forgive us. He allowed his beloved Son to die just so he could offer us pardon. When we come to Christ, he forgives all the sins we have committed or will ever commit.

We don't need to confess the sins of the past all over again, and we don't need to fear that God will reject us if we don't keep our slate perfectly clean.

Of course we should continue to confess our sins, but not because failure to do so will make us lose our salvation. Our relationship with Christ is secure. Instead, we should confess so that we can enjoy maximum fellowship and joy with him.

True confession also involves a commitment not to continue in sin. We wouldn't be genuinely confessing our sins to God if we planned to commit them again and just wanted temporary forgiveness.

We should also pray for strength to defeat temptation the next time we face it.

If God has forgiven us for our sins because of Christ's death, why must we confess our sins?

In admitting our sins and receiving Christ's cleansing, we are:

- (1) Agreeing with God that our sin truly is sin and that we are willing to turn from it,

- (2) Ensuring that we don't conceal our sins from him and consequently from ourselves, and
- (3) Recognizing our tendency to sin and relying on his power to overcome it.

Chapter 10

Examples of forgiveness

Esau forgive Jacob (Genesis 33)

Jacob had robbed Esau of his birthright, but Esau forgave him.

Joseph forgives his brothers (Genesis 45, 50)

The brothers of Joseph had sold him into slavery, taken his coat and told their father that he had died. Joseph gained power and position and forgave his brothers.

Miriam was forgiven by Moses (Numbers 12)

Miriam, the sister of Joseph became jealous of Moses and his special relationship with God, as well as was angry because Moses had married a nonisraelite woman. Because of this God smote her with leprosy and directed Moses to send her out of the camp.

Moses pleaded with God for her healing and forgave her.

David forgives Saul (1 Samuel 24-26) (2 Samuel 1)

Saul attempted to find David and kill him, but David spared Saul's life

and forgave him.

David forgives Shimei (2 Samuel 16, 1 Kings 2)

Shimei called David a murderer and threw stones at him, but David forgave him, saying the Lord had bidden Shimei to do this. David forgave him.

Solomon forgave Adonijah (1 Kings 1)

King David designated his son Solomon to become the next king, but another son, Adonijah tried to claim the honor. Solomon forgave him.

Jesus forgives his enemies. (Luke 23)

When Jesus was facing the crucifixion, he said, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.

The father of the prodigal son forgave him. (Luke 25)

The disobedient son wasted his father’s money and lived a life of sin, but when he returned home, his father forgave him.

If you are dealing with a problem of unforgiveness today, please remember that only through forgiving others will God, through Christ

forgive you.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: New Living Bible translation.

Additional comments and charts are taken from:

***Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print**