

Used

A BIBLICAL STUDY OF PRAYER by Joseph Hopper

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY. "The whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer." Some human help: Shorter Catechism 98-107. "With Christ in the School of Prayer", by Andrew Murray. Much to be said in these studies has been suggested by Murray.

I. "The Key to Prayer-Our Father."

Scripture, Matthew 6:5-15.

Let us take hold of the key to prayer-found right at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer-"Our Father."

The word "holy", says Murray, "is the central word in the Old Testament, the name "Father" of the New." The word "Father" is used 17 times by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

In the first recorded teaching of Jesus on the subject of prayer (John 4:23-24) He tells us that the Father seeks true worshippers. How may we qualify as true worshippers of the Father? Two passages of scripture help us to answer this question: John 1:12 and Galatians 4:4-6. "To have Christ the Son, and the Spirit of the Son dwelling within us, and revealing the Father, this makes us true, spiritual worshippers." (Murray.)

The Sermon on the Mount is the first public teaching of Jesus to His disciples, a part of it on the subject of prayer. In Matthew 6:6-8 the word "Father", the chief word, is used three times. Here emphasis is placed upon secret, closet prayer. The first thing in closet prayer is, I must meet my Father. (Murray) The light in the prayer closet is the Father's face, and the air the Father's love. The Father is in secret, and seeth in secret, and knoweth our needs. "The knowledge of God's Father-love is the first and simplest but also the last and highest lesson in the school of prayer." (Murray)

Let us now list some things about our Father in relation to our praying.

1. Seeking. Ours is a seeking God. Gen. 3:9-"Where art thou?"
Luke 19:10-"The Son of man came to seek and to save---"
John 4:23-The Father seeking true worshippers.
2. Waiting. In secret, for us to come into His presence.
3. Seeing. In secret to recompense. The Father's heart of love.
4. Knowing. He knows our needs before we ask.
5. The Father's Glory-the chief end of Prayer. The Father is first in prayer according to the teaching of Jesus. "The glory of the Father must be the aim and end, the very soul and life of our prayer." How often our praying purely self-interest and expression of self-will.

In the Lord's Prayer first the Father's name, the Father's kingdom, the Father's will. Thy-Thy-Thy, then us, us, us, us.

6. The Father's Giving-the evidence of His love. John 3:16.
In response to prayer we see the Father (1) providing, (2) pardoning abundantly, (3) protecting, Psalm 121.
7. The Father of How Much More. Matthew 7:11.
 - (1) How much more in knowledge. He knows how to give good things.
 - (2) How much more in resources. Romans 8:32
 - (3) How much more in character. We evil, He holy.

Conclusion: Be a child of our Father and live as a child of our Father, then it will be the normal experience thru prayer to "draw near to God, with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father, able and ready to help us."

Who are the children of God? From the Godward side the answer is Romans 8:14. From the human side of the divine activity carried on by the Holy Spirit the answer is John 1:12.

What is child-like living? According to the Sermon on the Mount here are some marks of child-like living:

- (1) Being a peace-maker Matthew 5:9.
- (2) Letting your light shine 5:16
- (3) Loving your enemies and praying for your persecutors 5:44

(4) Seeking to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. 5:48

(5) Humility. 6:1

(6) The forgiving spirit. 6:14-15.

(7) Freedom from anxiety 6:32

(8) Summary: Doing the will of the Father. "Live as a child of God, then you will be able to pray as a child, and as a child you will be most assuredly heard."

"Father-like giving is the divine response to child-like living."

"We must learn to say well 'Abba Father'! Our Father who art in heaven. He that can say this has the key to all prayer."

"John Calvin reminds us that two things are necessary as we pray; consciousness of God's fatherly love, and confidence in His boundless power."

"I have read a story somewhere which tells when one of the Roman Emperors was entering Rome in triumph, a little child darted through the ranks of the soldiers who lined the road and made for the gorgeous car in which the Emperor was seated. Some of the soldiers tried to restrain the little one and said to him, 'It's the Emperor.' 'Your Emperor' said the child, 'but my father.' That was the little boy's right to sit even in the triumphal car. What right have you and I, poor sinners, to approach the King of kings and Lord of lords before whom Cherubim and Seraphim veil their faces? What right? The right this word gives. Lord of the Universe? Yes. Maker of worlds? Yes. But our Father; who shall dare keep child and parent apart?"

-Dr. Stacy Roberts.

"My Father is rich in houses and lands,
He holdeth the wealth of the world in His hands;
Of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold
His coffer are full, He has riches untold.

I'm a child of a King, The child of a King;
With Jesus my Savior, I'm the child of a King."

II. A Major Scriptural Emphasis about Prayer-The Certainty that God Hears and Answers.

Scripture: Mt.6:6(Recompense),Mt.7:7-11(Good things), Luke 11:13("The all-comprehensive gift"),James 4:3.

"Next to the revelation of the Father's love, there is, in the whole course in the school of prayer, not a more important lesson than this: Everyone that asketh receiveth."
The certainty of answer to prayer.

Striking Answers to Prayer in the Old Testament.

1. Abraham's servant. Guidance in selecting a wife for Isaac.Gen.24:10-27.
2. Jacob.Gen.32:24-32 Hos.12:3-4. Face of God. Finger of God. Clinging to God. Supplication to God.
3. Moses-(1) For Pharoah-Removal of plagues. Ex.8:12-13; 9:33.
(2) For Israelites a. Against Amalekites Ex.17:11
b. Forgiveness(calf-worship) Ex.32.
(3) For Miriam-Healing of leprosy Num.12:13.
(4) For Aaron-Sin of making golden calf Ex.32.
(5) For guidance-Gracious reply.Ex.33:12-16.
(6) God's presence.Numbers 10:35-36
(7) For God's help. Num.11:11-15.
(8) For murmurers. Num.14:13-20.
(9) For a successor.Num.27:15-17.
(10) To enter Canaan. Deut.3:25 Answered on Mount of Transfiguration.
4. Hannah. For a son. 1 Sam.1:11 and 27-28.

5. Samuel. For deliverance from enemy. 1 Sam. 7:5-12 1 Sam. 12:23
6. David. For his house 2 Sam. 7:18-29
For forgiveness and peace. Psalm 51.
7. Elijah. God's glory at stake. Reason for his success in prayer given in 1 Kings 18:37 Answered 1 Kings 18:39.
8. Elisha. Raises Shunamite's son from the dead. 2 Kings 4:33-36.
Eyes of young man opened 2 Kings 6:17--
9. Hezekiah. Under ministry of Isaiah, who was also a man of prayer.
Delivered from Sennacherib 2 Kings 19:14, 15, 19, 20.
10. Daniel. Dan. 9. Prays for his people. Gabriel brings answer- The seventy weeks and the Anointed Prince.

Striking Answers to Prayer in the New Testament.

1. Zacharias-For a son. Luke 1:13-17.
2. Blind man. Luke 18:38, 41-43.
3. Thief on the cross. Luke 23:42-43.
4. Ten days prayer meeting. Acts 1. Pentecost Acts 2.
5. Peter and John and others. Acts 4:31.
6. Stephen. Acts 7:60. "The church owes Paul to the prayer of Stephen." Augustine.
7. Paul-Behold, he prayeth", Acts 9:11 Acts 11:25 Acts 20:36.
(1) Romans 1:9-11 "unceasingly I made mention of you--
(2) 1 Thess. 3:10-13 "night and day praying exceedingly---
(3) Romans 10:1-2 " my heart's desire and supplication to God--
(4) Eph. 1:16, 19 "cease not to give thanks ~~to~~ for you---
(5) Eph. 3:14-19 "For this cause I bow my knees---
(6) Phil. 1:4-11 "making my supplication with joy---
(7) Col. 1:9-11 "do not cease to pray and make request---
(8) Col. 2:1-2 "how greatly I strive for you---

Paul was filled with the Spirit and had a Spirit-filled ministry.

8. Church in Jerusalem. Acts 12:5-11.
9. Church in Antioch. Acts 13:1-3. Sending out missionaries
10. Jesus the Matchless Example. John 11:41-42
(1) Luke 3:21-22. Heaven opened, Holy Spirit came down upon Him.
(2) Mk. 1:32-35 Strength for the day.
(3) Luke 6:12-13 Wisdom and power for choice of twelve.
(4) Luke 9:18-20 Peter's great confession, fruit of prayer of Jesus.
(5) Luke 9:28-36 Transfiguration.
(6) Luke 11:1-13 Lord's prayer-"born out of the prayer of Jesus".
(7) John 14:16 "Entire dispensation of the New Testament with wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit, is outcome of prayer of the Lord Jesus."
(8) John 17. Illustration of what Jesus is doing now.
(9) Mt. 26:36-46 Prepared for the Cross.
(10) Heb. 7:25 "ever liveth to make intercession for us"
"Don't Stop Praying. God Answers Prayer."

III. The True Glory of Prayer-Intercession.

Scripture: Luke 11:1-13. Especially verses 5-8.

"Intercession is prayer on behalf of another." The very pronouns of the Lord's Prayer include others-"Our Father. Give us". Forgive us". Lead us". Deliver us".

Andrew Murray says this parable in Luke 11:5-8 "is a perfect storehouse of instruction in regard to true intercession. There is, first, the love which seeks to help the needy around us: 'my friend is come to me.' Then the need which urges to the cry; 'I have nothing to set before him'. Then follows the confidence that help is to be had: 'which of you shall have a friend, and say, Friend, lend me three loaves.' Then comes the unexpected refusal, 'because of his importunity.' And lastly, the

I cannot rise and give thee. Then again the perseverance that takes no refusal.

reward of such prayer, 'he will give him as many as he needeth.' Out of this storehouse of instruction in the school of intercession we need to be prepared to pass three tests: the life test, the heart test, and the faith test.

1. The Life Test, which has to do with our conduct.

Murray says that the chief thought of the parable before us is "prayer as an appeal to the friendship of God--- but friendship depends upon conduct. Jesus said, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." John 15:14.

Abraham was evidently a man who passed this life test which has to do with conduct, thus qualifying him to be a friend of God. Three times in the Bible he is referred to as the friend of God. 2 Chron. 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; and then James 2:22-23. His faith was active--"walked on legs" and was shown in his conduct. Such a man could approach God as a friend and intercede for Sodom, and intercede with the boldness of a friend.

How do you and I by our conduct of life, by our doing the things Jesus commands us, qualify to become His friends? Think about this the next time you sing, "What a Friend we have in Jesus."

2. The Heart Test. This has to do with our aim in prayer. "When I come to God in prayer," says Murray, "He always looks at what the aim is of my petition." Is my aim that God may be glorified in helping others? In the parable before us the praying friend was desirous of securing bread for his hungry friend.

God is well-pleased with unselfish praying. There is the hungry friend of mine in Korea, physically hungry, spiritually hungry. As Jesus saw the hungry multitudes He said to His disciples, "Give ye them to eat." As He went about the cities and villages in Palestine the eye of Jesus saw the multitudes distressed and scattered as sheep not having a shepherd. The heart of Jesus was moved with compassion, the voice of Jesus called for intercessory praying as He said, "The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few, Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth laborers into his harvest."

Do we realize that the supply of laborers in God's harvest field at home and abroad is dependent to a great extent upon our prayers?

3. The Faith Test. Besides the life test, and the heart test, there is the faith test in the school of intercession. Our faith is tested particularly by delay in answer which calls for bold insistence on our part and perseverance in prayer.

In the parable the host friend at midnight did not give the requested bread at once. Yet the praying friend would not take a refusal. Being merely a friend of the host was not sufficient in this case to get an immediate response. "Because of his importunity he will arise and give him as many as he needeth." It was necessary to be an importunate friend. That word, "importunity" carries the idea of "shameless insistence", the argument of the parable being "that if by shameless insistence a favor may be won, even from an unwilling and ungracious, still more surely will God answer the earnest prayer of His people."

Often our faith is tested by delay, yet often some of the richest blessings come from importunate praying.

"Delays in our prayers are by no means denials; they are often but the lengthened summer for the ripening of our blessings, making them larger and more sweet."

"And let us hold fast the three-fold cord that cannot be broken: the hungry friend needing help, and the praying friend seeking the help, and the Mighty Friend loving to give as much as he needeth."

Besides this perfect storehouse of instruction in regard to intercession given in this parable, other scriptures give us striking illustrations of true intercession.

At the conclusion of the book of Job is to be found this golden text--Job 42:10, "And Jehovah turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: and Jehovah gave Job twice as much as he had before."

The intercession of Moses for Israel, Exodus 32:31-32 is most impressive and instructive. Listen to my teacher, Dr. Edward Mack, "who being dead, yet speaketh," as he describes it:

"When Moses came down from the mount, and found the people returned to idolatry, his anger burned so that he broke the precious tables of stone, and called for vengeance on the sinners. But after much blood had flowed, and time for quieting of his impatient anger had passed, his father-heart was moved with pity for a people who were to him as his own children. His tender intercession for them before Jehovah, 'if Thou wilt forgive their sin-, and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book, which Thou hast written,' remains as one of the notable way marks of the Old Testament pilgrimage. It is life for life, his life given for his people, to win back life for them; an intimation, or a type, of the great Atonement. But Moses was not adequate for the great sacrifice, for he himself was a sinner, and not a lamb without spot or blemish. Therefore his offer was passed over, and Jehovah said, 'Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out from my book.' Nevertheless his noble offer stands as the clearest Old Testament type of Christ's voluntary sacrifice; and we can well understand how 'He began with Moses' to teach men of Himself."

This brings us to the Matchless Intercessor-Jesus- who loved us and gave Himself for us. His supreme sacrifice on Calvary was not for Himself, and He ever liveth to make intercession for us. His great intercessory prayer in John 17 is an illustration of what He is doing now in heaven. He is praying that His people be kept, sanctified, spiritually united, and made to participate in His glory. Just as a Christian may know from experience the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, so he may have fellowship with the living Christ in intercession. Dr Murray says, "We share with Jesus in all He is and has: 'The glory which Thou gavest me, I have given them.' We are partakers of His life, His righteousness, His work: We share with Him in His intercession too; it is not a work that He does without us." In the light of these truths we believe Murray is correct in saying that the true glory of prayer is intercession.

The apostle Paul who in the spirit of Calvary made supplication to God to save his people (See Romans 9:1-3 and 10:1) wrote in 1 Corinthians 13 concerning love that "it seeketh not its own."

"Write it over the manger in Bethlehem-Seeketh not His own

Write it over the cross of Calvary-Seeketh not His own

Write it over the throne of the living Christ today-Seeketh not His own. "

Such a Christ-like spirit characterizes the true intercessor. He is a person who "seeketh not his own."

"Lord, help me live from day to day
In such a self-forgetful way,
That even when I kneel to pray
My prayer shall be for others.

Others, Lord, yes, others
Let this my motto be
Help me to live for others
That I may live like Thee."

IV. A Chief Essential for Prevailing Prayer-Faith.

In the recorded words of Jesus much is said on the subject of faith. The word faith itself is found about 20 times. Here are some of the passages where Jesus uses this essential word of the Christian's vocabulary:

1. Matthew 8:10
2. Matthew 9:22
3. Matthew 9:29
4. Matthew 15:28
5. Matthew 17:20
6. Matthew 21:21-22
7. Mark 11:22-24

To these seven passages from the words of Jesus let us add two from James, and one from

the faith chapter of Hebrews: James 1:5-6; 5:15.

James may have learned these lessons about faith and prayer when a boy along with his brother, Jesus, as they were taught the scripture at their mother's knee.

In the great faith chapter in Hebrews 11:6 are these words: "And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after him."

Without faith we cannot be saved.

Without faith we cannot live right.

Without faith we cannot pray right.

Out of the ten rich passages mentioned above let us concentrate particularly on one, Mark 11:24, which tells us not only of the faith that expects, but also of the faith that takes. Let us look at these words of Jesus as explained by two great pray-ers, R.A. Torrey, and Andrew Murray.

Dr. Torrey says this text teaches that "there is a faith that puts out its hand and takes on the spot the very thing it asks of God. A literal translation of the original Greek brings this out: "Therefore I say unto you, all things whatsoever ye pray and ask for believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them." "Believe that ye have received them" past tense, "and ye shall have them" future tense, in other words, "believe that you have received" and "you shall have what you have already got.."
Does that make sense? It does in the light of 1 John 5:14-15. Listen-"When you come to God in prayer, the first question to ask is, 'Is that petition that I asked of God according to His will?' If it is definitely promised in His word, then, of course, you know it is 'according to His will.' Now then read 1 John 5:14, "And this is the confidence that we have towards Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us." Then saying to yourself, "I asked this definite thing, I know it is according to God's will, because it is definitely promised in His word, therefore according to 1 John 5:14 I know that He has heard me." Then read the 15th verse. "And if we know that He heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him, and claim the thing as yours not because you feel it but because God so definitely says so in His word---- And what you thus take upon naked faith in the word of God, you shall afterwards have in actual experimental possession." -R.A. Torrey.

This kind of faith reminds us of the story of the little girl whose "father was building a new house for himself and was inspecting the cellar. As yet there was no stairway, and he was there in the dark. He heard the patter of little feet over his head and he ran to the opening which the stairs were to fill. He heard a little voice ask, 'Papa, are you there?' He answered, 'Yes, Mary, I am here. Jump down and I will catch you.' And the little child jumped down so quickly that if he had not sprung forward to receive her she would have broken her limbs upon the floor below. It was a leap into the dark. But she knew her father's voice, and had faith in his word."

Now let us look again at this same verse as explained by Andrew Murray who said, "Faith is the pledge and forerunner of the coming answer."

"All things whatsoever."- "The whatsoever is unconditional: the only condition is what is implied in the believing. Where we can believe we must find out and know what God's will is believing is the exercise of a soul surrendered and given up to the influence of the Word and the Spirit; but when once we do believe nothing shall be impossible."

"Ye pray and ask for"- "It is in prayer that we hold up our desire in the light of God's Holy Will, that our motives are tested, and proof given whether we ask indeed in the name of Jesus, and only for the glory of God."

"Believe" Read verse 23.

"Have received". "This word is of central importance--- It may only be later that you shall have it in personal experience, that you shall see what you believe; but now without seeing, you are to believe that it has been given to you of the Father in heaven."

"I believe that I have it. I hold it in faith."

"And ye shall have them."—"That is, the gift which we first hold in faith as bestowed upon us in heaven will also become ours in personal experience. Sometimes we need to pray longer. Faith needs to be further tried and strengthened. Elijah knew for certain that rain would come; God had promised it; and yet he had to pray the seven times." It is thru "faith and patience that we inherit the promises. God only knows when everything in and around us is fully ripe for the manifestation of the blessing that has been given to faith." "Faith says most confidently, I have received it. Patience perseveres in prayer until the gift bestowed in heaven is seen on earth. Believe that ye have received and ye shall have. Between the have received in heaven and the shall have on earth, believe."

Now here comes the practical question for each of us. "How can I ever attain the faith that knows that it receives all it asks?"

In answer to this vital question we quote again from Andrew Murray as he says, "The power to believe a promise depends entirely but only on faith in the promiser-- Faith is the promise is the fruit of faith in the promiser; the prayer of faith is rooted in the life of faith.-- It is because so many of God's children do not understand this connection between the life of faith and the prayer of faith that their experience of the power of prayer is so limited."

"A physician would say to one asking for some means to get more strength in his arms and hands to seize and hold, that his whole constitution must be built up and strengthened. So the cure of a feeble faith is alone to be found in the invigoration of our whole spiritual life by intercourse with God."

"Learn to believe in God, to take hold of God, to let God take possession of thy life, and it will be easy to take hold of the promise."

D.L. Moody once said, "I prayed for faith and thought that some day faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But faith did not seem to come. One day I read the tenth chapter of Romans: "So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." I had closed my Bible and prayed for faith. I now opened my Bible and began to study, and faith has been growing ever since."

"Take time to be holy
Speak oft with thy Lord;
Abide in Him always
And feed on His word."

V. Another Chief Essential for Prevailing Prayer--A Forgiving Disposition.

During these few hours together we have considered, First, "The Key to Prayer--Our Father"; second, "A major Scriptural Emphasis about Prayer", namely The Certainty that God Hears and Answers Prayer; third, "The True Glory of Prayer--Intercession"; fourth, "A Chief Essential for Prevailing Prayer--Faith". Now we are to consider one other chief essential for prevailing prayer, and that is, A Forgiving Disposition.

For true praying there must not only be the right relationship to God, "Have faith in God", but there must also be the right relationship to our fellowmen. Have love for men. Let us look at five passages where Jesus teaches us on this subject, and two passages from the writings of the apostle Paul.

1. Mt. 5:23-24.
2. Mt. 5:44-47
3. Mt. 6:14-15
4. Mt. 18:21-35
5. Mk. 11:22-25
6. Eph. 4:32
7. Col. 3:13.

These passages have to do with our relationship to our brother, our enemy, to men in general, to anyone, and to each other. "A great sin of praying people and a great cause of feebleness in their prayers" is the unforgiving spirit towards others.

Let us take note of seven things here taught us about a forgiving disposition—that attitude so essential to prevailing prayer.

- (1) 1. A forgiving spirit towards our brother is more urgent even than praying. The reason for this is that a failure to have a forgiving spirit is a primary hindrance to acceptable prayer. The Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, showed plainly how God was displeased with wickedness and worship. See Isaiah 59:1-2. And the psalmist said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear." 66:18. Then Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount says, Mt. 5:23-24. Are you holding a grudge in your heart against someone else? Are you saying, I can never forgive him? Reconciliation is more urgent than praying. It is absolutely necessary to acceptable prayer. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: and keep on becoming kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you." Eph. 4:31-32. "In each prayer to the Father I must be able to say, that I know of no one whom I do not heartily love." The attitude of Joseph of old towards his brethren who had been so cruel to him is a shining example of true forgiveness.

- (2) 2. A forgiving spirit makes us like our Father in heaven, and unlike non-Christians. Just to read the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount clearly shows this—"Love your enemies—Pray for them that persecute you—that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven—For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?" A comment made by non-Christians as they saw the manner of life of the early Christians was, "Behold, how they love one another." This wonderful teaching of Jesus as to our attitude towards our enemies is anticipated in the book of Proverbs in these words, Prov. 25:21-22—"If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; And if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: for thou wilt heap coals of fire upon his head, And Jehovah will reward thee."

3. A forgiving disposition is necessary in order to obtain personal forgiveness. Three passages before us emphasize this. Mt. 6:14-15; 18:35; Mark 11:25. In the Lord's prayer we say, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Dr. Stacy Roberts well says; "Remember this is a prayer for the children of God. I do not go to a man outside who has never given himself to God and tell him that if he will forgive everybody God will forgive him. God begins forgiving us in His own free grace. The unforgiven man can be forgiven without any condition except that he repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. He will blot out the sins of such like a thick cloud. When that is done, the soul enters the kingdom and now Jesus superimposes upon His own subject, as the condition for forgiveness, that he should be forgiving. If we are unforgiving, in the necessity of the case, God will not forgive us."

King David had a forgiving spirit towards his enemy, Saul, 1 Sam. 24:6-7, and towards his enemy son, Absalom, 2 Sam. 18:5, and God freely forgave David when he confessed his great sin. "God's free and full forgiveness is to be the rule of ours with men." "The spirit of forgiveness is the spirit of love. Because God is love He forgives; it is only as we are dwelling in love that we can forgive as God forgives."

4. We are further taught by Jesus that the forgiveness of a brother who has sinned against us is to be unlimited. Peter's question was, "How often shall I forgive him?" The answer of Jesus, seven times seventy means unlimited forgiveness, and the parable of the unmerciful servant enforces this teaching. In this parable the man who was forgiven about \$1000 was unwilling to forgive about 17 cents. "This is Jesus' comparison of our sins against God to those sinned against us."

5. A forgiving disposition avoids terrific punishment. The wicked servant who did not have a forgiving spirit must suffer at the hands of the tormentors. Thus this word of the parable indicates that Jesus considers an unforgiving spirit a most heinous sin. It is rooted in the violation of the sixth commandment.

6. Forgiveness of a brother must come from the heart. To say with the lips you forgive a person will not avail. Our heavenly Father requires that our forgiveness of a brother come from the heart. The concluding words of Jesus' parable show quite clearly there is absolutely no hope of our forgiveness unless we forgive others from the heart. Of this conclusion of the parable one writer says, "Is that tender name of Father out of place? By no means; for is it not the outraged love of God that cries out against the unforgiving soul? And the words, 'From your hearts' are they not too hard on poor, frail, human nature? It is easy enough to grant forgiveness with the lips-but from the heart? Yet so it stands written and it only shows the need we have not only of unlimited mercy, but of unmeasured grace."

7. This leads us to say that this forgiving spirit is inseparable from Christ and the Cross Eph. 4:32 Col 3:13. "Forgiving each other as God also in Christ forgave you." The forgiving spirit is the Christ-like spirit. When hanging upon the cross of Calvary He prayed for His murderers, saying, "Father, forgive them-they know not what they do." The martyr, Stephen, had this Christ-like spirit as he was being stoned to death he prayed for them that did the wrong.-"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." This forgiving spirit is generated at the Cross of Christ. "For the love of Christ constraineth us." 2 Cor. 5:14. "Forgiving each other as God also in Christ forgave you." "That motive drawn from the forgiving mercy of God could only be exhibited in all its significance by the light shed upon it in the atoning death of Christ."

How then, may a frail, weak sinner such as I attain to this "even as" standard of forgiveness held up by Jesus and by Paul? How may I have this another chief essential for availing prayer? Let the apostle Paul out of his rich experience as a Christian give the answer as he says, "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me." ^{Phil. 4:13} Let Jesus Himself answer as He gives the "all-inclusive condition for acceptable prayer: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you. " John 15:7.

"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice rise like a fountain for me night and day. For what are men better than sheep or goats, if knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer Both for themselves and those that call them friend. For so the whole round earth is every way Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

-Tennyson.