

Bible
4/24/60
Ann

"Forgive Us"

Scripture Lesson:- Matthew 6: 9 - 16.

Text:- Matthew 6: 9. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Introduction:- This prayer for forgiveness meets a demand that is just as universal as is that for our daily bread. All of us need to pray for it, because we have all sinned. I am quite sure that sensitiveness toward sin is by no means an outstanding characteristic of our generation. Our consciences seem to have become strangely benumbed. There are multitudes of us in this twentieth century who fancy that we have run past this sort of praying. We never think of praying it at all. There are others who pray it after a fashion, but without a feeling of reality and earnestness. It is an easy utterance of our lips, rather than an anguished cry of our hearts that is red with shame and wet with tears.

The whole Bible is written on the assumption that man is a sinner. It declares emphatically that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." And in so saying, it speaks home to the deepest consciousness of the race. And there is not a man of us who, when he dares honestly to face the facts about himself, can deny in good conscience that he ^{was} is a sinner. The Bible gives two definitions of sin. First, sin is the transgression of the law. It is doing what we know to be wrong. It is the cho

of the lower rather than the higher. It is doing the thing that we know we ought not to do. It is thinking the thoughts that we know we ought not to think. It is speaking the word that we know we have no right to speak. Sin is wrongdoing, and who can honestly say, that he never has been guilty of a single wrong?

Then, the Bible defines sin as failure in right-doing. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." You can commit sin by not doing the thing you know you ought to do. The rich man, in the parable of the beggar who was beaten on his way to Jerico, left the beggar to die, because he did not go to his help. Sin, is wrong doing. It is also failure in right-doing. Who, of us, has helped lift every load? Who of us has given all that we might have given? Not one of us, we have not done our best. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God.

I.

Then, we have not only failed in right-doing, but in right-being. We are far from the realization of Christ's great dream for us. "What do ye more than others?", he asks of us this morning as he asked his disciples long ago. The tragedy of Samson's vow was not that he became worse than other men, but rather that he became like other men, when God has called him to be vastly different. We have failed, every one of us, to measure up to our highest possibilities. We all need to pray for forgiveness, because God alone can forgive. We cannot earn this forgiveness. It must come to us

as a gift of God.

III.

But what do we mean by forgiveness? Forgiveness is not a trifling matter. Some think of it as an escape from punishment. Sin is the remission of a penalty. But forgiveness must go deeper than that. A man, being tried for murder is set free by the impassioned plea of one of his lawyers. The accused man hurries to give thanks to the other lawyer, he had employed. But the man who had saved his life, said to him, in a disgusting manner, "Away; you are guilty as sin." This man went free, but he was not forgiven. What then is forgiveness? Forgiveness means reconciliation. Because it means this, it has its issue in a new man. The Governor may pardon a thief, but he will still be a thief. But when God pardons a thief, he makes him into a honest man. To be forgiven, therefore, is to be a new creature in Christ Jesus.

How is this forgiveness to become ours? This

prayer teaches that it may be ours for the asking.

- But in asking for forgiveness, we, of course,

pledge ourselves to give up all known sin. The

sin that is specifically mentioned is the sin of

hate. "If you forgive men their trespasses, your

Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your

trespasses. But, you ask, is there no forgiveness

possible on any other grounds? There is no other

ground. This is the case, not because Christ is

unwilling to forgive the unforgiving, but because

it is impossible for him to do so. "When ye stan

praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any: that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you! God is eager to forgive all of us. But till we are willing to forgive, he simply cannot forgive us. To be forgiven is to be a new creation. It is to have peace with God, and peace with our fellow men. It is to have hate changed into love. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren!"

IV. Perhaps there are those who feel that genuine forgiveness on their part is impossible. If you do think so, remember, that in allowing yourself to hate, you are doing yourself the greatest possible injury. Your unforgiving spirit is a grief to God: it may lead you to do harm to the object of your dislike. Hate and hell always live in the same heart. This is true here and now; it will be true hereafter, forever. Of all the sins that eat like acid into the soul, this is the worst.

But our greatest help toward a forgiving heart is the remembrance of God's forgiveness to us. To illustrate, Jesus told the story of a certain king that set out to reckon with his servants. One poor fellow who was brought before him, was hopelessly in debt. He owed his lord much money, and had not a cent to pay. The king ordered the man to be sold into slavery, and his wife and children. When he realized his debt was his ruin, not only to himself, but to those he loved, he fell down on his face and begged the king to have mercy, and he would pay all. The king, out of sheer kindness of heart did far more. He cancelled the entire debt, and sent him away a free man. What was the result?

His eyes sparkled. His stooped shoulders were squared. He seemed like a new man. When he was asked what was the cause of his new attitude, he answered, "An hour ago I was hopeless, without a cent between me and slavery, both for myself and wife and children. I begged for more time to pay my debt. But His Majesty did far more. He cancelled the debt altogether.

Conclusion:- We must forgive; because hate is hell. We must forgive because One who was crucified and put to an open shame is even now offering us forgiveness. It is, therefore, in the realization of the deadliness of hate, and in the realization of the goodness of God in forgiving us infinitely more than we can ever be called upon to forgive, that we are to pray this prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Do you forgive the one who has sinned against you? Have you found forgiveness at the cross of Christ?

Have you been forgiven or is there something in your heart that would make it impossible for God to forgive you? Lay aside every hate, every grudge & let God make you a new creature. Don't let any hate or ill will keep you out of heaven.