

From Spiritual Hurt to Healing

Romans 8:1-11

Matthew 6: 9-12

Today, I would like to share the message of the fifth request in the Lord's Prayer. The fifth request in the Lord's Prayer is for forgiveness. Jesus knew that we would stand in need of forgiveness every day. And so we pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

There is an old woman who lives alone, without communication with others, goes to her upper room every day for prayer and she prays the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our sins as we also have forgiven those who have sinned against us." The Lord God hears her prayer and murmurs, "Oh dear! How could I forgive her sin since she lives alone and doesn't commit any sin against others?"

A human being is a relational being. That is the way God made human beings. Living and relating with others is a very important role in human life. When a ship is anchored at a harbor, it is in the safest place. But, if a ship is only kept in the safety of the harbor and does not move to sail the ocean, the ship can not live out its purpose. Likewise, a purpose of human life is to relate with others. If we kept to ourselves so that we would not commit any sin against others we would not be living out our purpose in life. In our life, there are many life issues that arise when relating with others. Anger and guilt are common issues that we deal with regularly. Anger and guilt are emotions derived from sin that occurs in relating with others.

Sin is a thought, word, deed, attitude, or intention that goes against God in relationship with others. It is a damaged relationship that sets us apart from God's creation. It makes people isolated and withdrawn. In God's eyes, human life is more important than the sins that occur in the process of living. That's why God sent His Son. God sent Jesus to save human life, which was in a state of death by sin and from the hurts of sin, so that He would heal the wounds of sin.

Jesus' ministry starts with preaching the gospel and healing. "From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.'" (Matthew 4:17) "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, teaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people." (Matthew 4:23) And before his healing he pronounced, "Your sins are forgiven." Healing and forgiving are connected in his ministry.

Here we have questions. Christians believe that we receive forgiveness from God by grace alone. Why, in this request, does Jesus make it sound like our forgiveness of others is a condition for our forgiveness from God? Why should we ask for forgiveness of our sins again and again? Once, before entering seminary, I asked my brother who was a minister, "Why do people repeat again and again the same prayer? Is it because they do not have faith or confidence that their sins are forgiven?" He replied, "You ate a big

dinner yesterday. Then, why do you want dinner again today?” Jesus taught us to ask God, “Give us today our daily bread.” And, he also taught us to ask for daily forgiveness of sins.

Why should we ask for forgiveness our sins again and again? I would like to answer this question in three aspects.

First, even though we confess our Lord and our sins are forgiven by the grace of the Lord, we are still sinner and need to clean up our daily hearts.

One evening after dinner Jesus got up from the meal table and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them out with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to Him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Jesus replied, “You do not realize what I am doing, but later you will understand.” “No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” “Then Lord” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!” Jesus answered, “A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.”

What is the greatest sin? According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is pride. C.S. Lewis said, “The more pride one has, the more one dislikes pride in others.” In fact, if you want to find out how proud you are, the easiest way is to ask yourself, “How much do I dislike it when other people snub me, or refuse to take any notice of me, or shove their oar in, or patronize me, or showoff?” The point is that each person’s pride is in competition with everyone else’s pride. Does this seem exaggerated? If so, think it over.

Pride is essentially competitive. Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next person. According to Augustine, baptism washes original sin away. Therefore, the children of a baptized couple must be free from original sin. Augustine answered this question by saying that the pride of original sin is removed by baptism but the lust of procreation remains as the channel of transmitting original sin.

Second, even though our sins are forgiven, guilt and anger caused by sins remain in our heart.

In the Lord’s Prayer, “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors,” we can see a poignant message for us in terms of spiritual healing. As I mentioned before, anger and guilt that disturb our heart and expel peace from our heart are common issues that we should deal with every day. Anger and guilt are emotions derived from sin that occurs in relating with others.

There are two words, sin and guilt, that are identical in every person or group. The theologian Reinhold Niebuhr felt uncomfortable with the idea that sin and guilt are identical in every person or group, because there are differences in the sin of oppressors

and the sin of the oppressed. Oppressors and the oppressed are all sinners, but there is a difference in guilt. Oppressors are guiltier than the oppressed, Niebuhr thought.

When you heal from surgery, a scar is left in the place where you had the surgery, and at least at first, some symptoms of uneasiness may remain. Likewise, even if we are forgiven by the confession our sins, there remains a scar of guilt and anger in our hearts that need to be healed completely. For the healing of the remaining pain of guilt and anger, we need to ask for forgiveness of our sins. The oppressor may be a sinner with more guilt than the oppressed, while the oppressed may be a sinner with more anger than the oppressor.

Guilt is an awareness of having done wrong or having committed sin. It is the primary conscious experience as a sinner. Some people find it irrational to suffer guilt over what happened in the past. For them, the rational look toward the future, not the guilt of the past. The term guilt has several dimensions. There is legal, ethical, and religious guilt. Legal guilt involves culpability and responsibility for crimes. Ethical guilt is a matter of moral accountability rather than legal liability. Drinking alcohol is legal, yet it may be a case of moral guilt for some. Religious guilt concerns our obligation before God and neighbor. A sin of omission or lust in our hearts may not be legally or ethically wrong, but can be religiously wrong.

Mentioning anger, Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.” “But anyone who says, ‘You fool’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.” Anger is the one of issues that we should not ignore.

Practically speaking, “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us,” is asking, “Lord I would get rid of my anger against those who hurt me, so let me get rid of the guilt of my actions as oppressor.” “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those that sin against us.” There is not the slightest suggestion that we are offered forgiveness on any other terms. It is made perfectly clear that if we do not forgive, we shall not be forgiven. There are no two ways about it. What are we to do?

The servant in Jesus’ parable owed his king two billion dollars, and the master forgave his debt. The servant’s coworker owed him twenty dollars, and he demanded repayment. What do the sizes of the two debts show you about the comparison of our debt of sin to God and the debt of hurt we are owed from others? Peter tried to impress Jesus one day with his willingness to forgive other people up to seven times. Jesus wasn’t impressed. Genuine forgiveness doesn’t keep a record, and genuine forgivers don’t keep count.

Lastly, even though our sins are confessed and forgiven we have sins not recognized.

I had a painful experience when I was in military training for twelve weeks for infantry officers in Korea. We were eight people, a team sharing living quarters, and all were religious persons in military training: Catholic priests, Buddhist monks, and protestant ministers in chaplaincy training. During the day we had to be in training—target shooting practice, bayonet drills, running, combat training and so forth like an infantry officer. Every Friday evening, we had an inspection of the soldiers' living quarters. Everybody was given his personal M16 that needed to be clean at all times. And, we also were issued a few other weapons, like a light machine gun, which was given to the team. At inspection time, the officer in charge visited each living quarters and inspected the cleanliness of weapons, clothing, bed and bedspread, and the room in general.

One Friday night we were inspected by the officer in charge and he picked up a light machine gun and asked us, "Who cleaned this?" Actually, nobody cleaned this light machine gun because nobody had paid any attention to these weapons. At that moment, if nobody took responsibility, all eight people would be punished. So, I told him I was responsible. He called me out and took me out for the punishment. I had to pack my fifty-pound of backpack and carry my M16 and run for an hour outside at midnight. That night, I got sick after running for an hour carrying all this.

Forgive us our sins! War is not personal sin but our collective sin. However, nobody will claim responsibility for it. If we live in a system of injustice, that system is our responsibility, our sin against God. We live with polluted air, water and environment, and this destruction is also our responsibility, our sins. Lord, forgive us our sins as we are responsible for the hurt of ourselves and others. The Lord gave us insight to see deeper into of our sins and hurts. Let us heal and be healed through seeking daily forgiveness.