

Wrestling in Prayer (Part 6)

Sunday, March 14, 2021

Colossians 4:12

12 Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.

Review (Parts 1-5)

In our series on WRESTLING IN PRAYER we began by discussing the basic **PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER...**

Then we learned to pray for **DAILY BREAD** and **WRESTLE TO MOVE**

- from **FEAR** to **FAITH**
- from **DOUBT** to **TRUST**
- **COMPLAINING** to **THANKSGIVING**
- **ANXIETY** to **PEACE**

We talked about Wrestling in Prayer for **A WORD FROM GOD** and hearing the voice of the Lord speak to us...

We saw how important it is for us to Wrestle in Prayer for **THE LOST**.

Last week we discussed the power of prayer in **OVERCOMING TEMPTATION**. We learned that this type of prayer begins by humbling ourselves

- **BELIEVING** God **EXISTS** (Our Father - who art - in heaven)
- **ACCEPTING** that God is absolutely **HOLY** and that His ways are **PERFECT** (hallowed by your name)
- **OBEDIENTLY** living out those truths in our lives (Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven)

We said that we...

- We wrestle in prayer to **OVERCOME TEMPTATION** by asking God to lead us or give us **DIRECTION**
- We wrestle in prayer to **OVERCOME TEMPTATION** by focusing on the **PROVISION** that God has already given us.
- Finally, we wrestle in prayer to **OVERCOME TEMPTATION** by standing in His **STRENGTH**

FORGIVENESS

Let's return to the model of prayer that Jesus gave to us in Matthew Chapter 9 as we examine one of the most unpopular types of wrestling prayer.

Matthew 6:9-15

9 “This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, **10** your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. **11** Give us today our daily bread. **12** And **forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.** **13** And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’ *for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.* **14** For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **15** But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

We hear the words of the Lord about forgiveness and yet they are often ignored or justified and left undone. We ignore it because it is not easy work. It is not delightful work and we often feel that we will have to take a loss, that there is no immediate benefit to ourselves to be found in this kind of praying. We justify ourselves as being exempt from Jesus’ instructions. He couldn’t have meant me because I have been terribly wronged and there are some things that are just too big to forgive and not covered in His command. We even go so far as to sometimes believe that it is wrong and unjust to forgive.

Yet, Jesus did give us these words and not just on one occasion. He made it very clear that our lack of willingness to forgive hinders, not only our prayers, but our own forgiveness

Matthew 5:21-24

21 “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ **22** But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

23 “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, **24** leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

And again, in Mark 11

Mark 11:22-25

22 “Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. **23** “Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what

they say will happen, it will be done for them. **24** Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. **25** And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.

And at the end of the parables of the unmerciful servant, Jesus spoke these words...

Matthew 18:32-35

32 “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ 34 In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

35 “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

Jesus taught us to wrestle in prayer for forgiveness. Our forgiveness from God and our forgiveness of others

12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

What would happen if Jesus forgave us to the same extent that we forgive others? Would you be happy with the same measure of forgiveness?

Back in December we talked about Joseph and how he wrestled with forgiveness. In answer to the question “Who am I in Christ?” We said, “I am one who, with God’s help, wrestles with issues of forgiveness until I surrender to His will (Your kingdom come, Your will be done) for me to forgive.” I taught in detail about the issue of forgiveness. I encourage you to go back to that message and listen to it again and then combine it with what I want to share with you today

- Forgiveness focuses more on PEOPLE than PROBLEMS
- Forgiveness focuses on RECONCILIATION and RESTORATION rather than REVENGE
- Forgiveness focuses on LETTING GO rather than HOLDING ON
- Forgiveness focuses on the FUTURE rather than the PAST
- Forgiveness ACKNOWLEDGES OUR EMOTIONS rather than DENY THEM
- Forgiveness focuses on HELPING rather than HURTING
- Forgiveness seeks to UNDERSTAND WHAT CAN BE UNDERSTOOD and ACCEPT THAT SOME THINGS WILL NEVER BE UNDERSTOOD
- Forgiveness tries to SEE THINGS FROM MANY DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES rather than JUST ONE
- Forgiveness seeks to ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY rather than PLACE BLAME
- Forgiveness seeks to BLESS rather than CURSE

Forgive us our debts...

We wrestle with our own sinfulness allowing the Holy Spirit to examine us, acknowledging and confessing our sin

Job 13:23

How many wrongs and sins have I committed? Show me my offense and my sin.

Job sarcastically prayed these words to God because he thought God was being unfair. I wish that we would, with humility and sincerity, pray these words every day.

David prayed this way in Psalm 139...

Psalm 139:23-24 (NKJV)

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; 24 And see if there is any wicked (evil, offensive, hurtful) way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

In psalm 51 David wrestled in prayer for forgiveness as he acknowledged and confessed his sin

Psalm 51:1, 3-4, 7, 10-11, 17 (NKJV)

A Prayer of Repentance

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

51 Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions.

3 For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin *is* always before me. **4** Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done *this* evil in Your sight— That You may be found just when You speak, *And* blameless when You judge.

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. **11** Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise.

We wrestle with the Magnitude of God's grace in our lives reminding ourselves how much God has forgiven us.

When we realize how much God has forgiven us, it makes it easier to forgive those who sin against us.

In Luke 7 we read of a Pharisee named Simon who invited Jesus to his house. A woman who had a sinful reputation showed up and broke an alabaster jar of perfume over his feet and began to wipe them with her hair. Simon was indignant and judged the woman in his heart

Luke 7:40-47

40 Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.”

“Tell me, teacher,” he said.

41 “Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?”

43 Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.”

“You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.

44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little (*or has failed to wrestle with the magnitude of how much God has forgiven them or who thinks they didn't have that much to be forgiven from*) loves little.”

Forgive us our debts...

We wrestle with the emotions of our hurt and pain not denying them but asking God to heal us.

Sometimes I think we don't want the hurt and pain to go away because they remind us to be angry and justify our unwillingness to forgive

Isaiah 61:1-3

61 The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim

freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, **2** to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, **3** and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.

We wrestle with our anger and trust in God's judgement and justice

Romans 12:19

19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

Ecclesiastes 3:17

"God will bring into judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time to judge every deed."

We wrestle to let go of the debt that has been incurred

The fact is, each of our sins called for the same sacrifice of Jesus' death on the cross which is an incomparable price compared to what our forgiveness of others costs us.

Matthew 18:21-35

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" (*quit trying to put a number on it. Just do it*)

22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

23 "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. 25 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.

26 "At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' 27 The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

28 “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded.

29 “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’

30 “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

32 “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ 34 In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

35 “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

We wrestle to pray for blessings in their lives and wish them well

Luke 6:27-28

27 “But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

We wrestle to love them with God's unconditional love

1 Corinthians 13

13 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. 12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 11:23-32

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." **25** In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." **26** For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

27 So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. **28** Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. **29** For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. **30** That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. **31** But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. **32** Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.