

DCF:

Are you good at what you do? Are you secure in your position at work, confident that if the company restructures you will keep your job? Are you confident that at your next performance review, you'll get the highest score? Or, do you need to be reassured by your boss that you are valuable, needed and wanted?

Maybe you don't have a job. Maybe you are still in school. How confident are you that you will pass to the next grade? Are you sure you'll sail through all the work still waiting for you through June of next year? Are you sure you'll be able to pick up all the knowledge that you need? Or, do you need to be reassured by your parents and teachers that you will do it?

Or, how confident are you that your marriage partner loves you? Didn't you just get in a fight over something last week? Aren't there times when a little voice in our heads tell us that he or she could have done better than me? Can you go for weeks without hearing those precious words "I love you" from your spouse? If you're human, you need to hear that you are wanted at your job, that you are a good student, that you are loved. If you're human, you need to be reassured.

How much more do we need to hear words of reassurance from our Lord? For we daily sin much and indeed deserve nothing but punishment. Today, we come before the Creator of heaven and earth and pray **“O LORD, REASSURE ME.”** Reassure me because my sins are always before me and I so often forget Your forgiveness and grace. O Lord, reassure me like Joseph did with his brothers.

Part One: My sins are always before me

Remember Joseph? Not Jesus' stepdad, but Joseph, the son of Jacob. His oldest brothers had treated him shabbily, but God brought him to a position of power in Egypt. He brought his father, his brothers and their family to Egypt to avoid the famine that swept the known world at that time. Joseph was second in command to Pharaoh and treated his relatives quite well. He settled them in Goshen, one of the prime pieces of real estate in Egypt. He fed them and protected them. It seems to us that he treated them quite well for years and years.

Now, however, their father had died and the brothers began to wonder. ***"It may be that Joseph will hate us and will pay us back in full for all of the evil that we did to him."*** (v. 15) You can just imagine the thoughts that raced through their minds. What if Joseph had treated them well because of dad? What if Joseph was just waiting for the right time to take out his anger against them for all that they had done to him? Yes, Joseph had told them he had forgiven them for what they did, but what if he changed his mind?

Oh, these brothers had done some terrible things to Joseph years ago. They had repented of those sins, but those sins were still stored in their memory banks. They knew what they had done. They had resented his favored status as they were growing up. They remembered how they felt when Joseph got that coat of many colors, and they did not. They remembered how they felt when Joseph told them his dreams of lording it over them. They remembered that they wanted to kill him and instead sold him into slavery. They remembered how they lied to their father and told him that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. Oh, they knew what they had done to Joseph. How could they forget such terrible things?

If such terrible things had happened to them, wouldn't they have sought revenge? Probably. And if they would have looked for payback, couldn't Joseph? That's what worried them. Oh, they had heard at one time that Joseph forgave them. He had treated them well ever since. But what if? What if Joseph changed his mind and now wanted revenge on them?

These men needed reassurance. They needed to hear again that Joseph had forgiven them and that all was ok between them. They wanted to be sure. That's why they sent this message to Joseph. They needed reassurance that they were forgiven for their sins.

As do we. Not only do we need to be reassured that the sins we committed this past week are forgiven. We need to be reassured that the sins we committed last year, 10 years ago, 30 years ago are forgiven. We need reassurance because we know our sins so well and God so little. We need to be reassured because we remember.

We remember the time, years ago, that we took something someone said the wrong way and blasted him. We remember the time we took advantage of someone, saw a filthy movie or thought some evil thoughts. We remember the time we stole some money out of mom's purse, or cheated on our income tax or on a test at school. We remember falsifying a report at work, gossiping about someone else, being jealous of another's success or cutting someone down. We remember. Oh, we repented of our sins at the time, but what if? What if God changes His mind? What if He says "OK, enough's enough. You've reached the limit of my forgiveness, so now I'm going to punish you for all your sins, including the ones I forgave you previously." Late at night the devil loves to dredge up those previous forgiven sins and torments us with the question "Did God really forgive you? Or is He waiting for the moment when He can swing the hammer of His judgement?" You and I know that revenge is a dish best served cold. O Lord, reassure me of my forgiveness, for my sins are always before me.

Part Two: I so often forget Your forgiveness and grace

O Lord, reassure me of my forgiveness, for I so often forget your forgiveness and grace. Why is that? Well, it's because forgiveness isn't natural to the human race. Hate and revenge are. That's why there are wars the world over. That's why there are lawsuits and fistfights. That's why there are battles between workers and owners, unions and companies, husbands and wives, friends and classmates. Forgiveness and grace aren't natural to the human race. Hatred and revenge, the fight for your rights, are the natural sinful state of life. If our first reaction to a sin against us is to retaliate, it's so easy to think that it would be God's reaction, too. It makes sense to us, doesn't it?

O how often we forget the amazing grace of our God! We forget that God so loved the world. We forget that Jesus suffered and died for our sins. We forget that God forgives and forgets all our sins. We forget all the times we've heard the words from God Himself in His Word "I have forgiven you." That's our sinful, forgetful nature, prompted by Satan. O Lord, reassure me. Reassure me that Jesus has died for my sins. Reassure me that you still love me. Reassure me that heaven is still mine, in spite of the sins I so often commit.

And, our gracious God does just that! Time and time again, He reassures us that all those sins that trouble us have been washed away. Listen to these reassuring words from our Lord. ***"As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."*** (Psalm 103:12) ***"I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more."*** (Isaiah 43:25) ***"I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist."*** (Isaiah 44:22)

Just like Joseph did with his brothers, so the Lord does with us. He reassures us. God wants us to be confident in our forgiveness. That's why God urges us to receive communion often, not just once or twice a year. That's why God repeats the news of our forgiveness time and time again. That's why we announce God's forgiveness every time we have a worship service. God wants us to be sure of our forgiveness because we so often forget it.

Today, we pray urgently "O Lord, reassure me" and He does. As God reassures us, so may we reassure others of their forgiveness. It's so tempting (and I use that word intentionally) to hold on to a grudge. It's so tempting to cut someone out of our lives and think "They'll have to live with what they did to me." It's so tempting to carry hurtful words and actions in our memory banks and look for ways to get payback. O Lord, reassure me of my forgiveness and then help me to forgive, as You have forgiven me. Help me to rebuild a relationship, as You have rebuilt my relationship with You.

It's true that everyone needs to be reassured. It doesn't matter if you're a worker, a student or a spouse. We all need reassurance in those roles. We also need reassurance as believers in Christ. Our sins are always before us and we so often forget God's forgiveness and grace. ***"O LORD, REASSURE ME."*** And, He does! He says "Be of good cheer. Your sins are forgiven."

AMEN