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MATTHEW

Chapter 06:14-17

ARE YOUR PRAYERS BLOCKED?

I. INTRODUCTION

A. In our study of **Matthew Chapter 6** last week – we finished the Lord’s Prayer!

1. And due to a lack of time and a desire to make just the prayer our focus – I did not add verses **14** and **15** to our study.

a) However, I think I need to go over those before we can move on in our study because they cannot be separated from the prayer:

b) **Matthew 6:5-15 (NKJV) 5** “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. **6** “But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. **7** “And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. **8** “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. **9** “In this manner, therefore, 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 this day our daily bread. **12** And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. **13** And do not lead us 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 men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **15** “But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

c) You see, answered prayer is directly linked to keeping a right relationship with the Lord and unforgiveness messes that up!

(1) Peter thought he had this forgiveness thing all figured out in **Matthew 18:21–35 (NKJV) — 21** Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” **22** Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. **23** Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. **24** And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. **25** But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. **26** The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ **27** Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. **28** “But that servant went out

and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took *him* by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' 29 So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' 30 And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. 31 So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. 32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. 33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' 34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. 35 "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

(2) **1 Peter 3:7–12 (NKJV) — 7** Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as *being* heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. **8** Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; **9** not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. **10** For "*He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. 11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.*"

(a) Here is the point: How can we truly be forgiven and experience the grace of the Lord and not extend that to others?

(i) The lack of forgiveness is EVIL and therefore CANNOT be blessed of the Lord. Fact is - He opposes it!

B. Now I would like to pause here for a moment to say something I think is very important.

1. I also think it is very misunderstood amongst Christians and even some pastors, and as a result can cause a lot of grief.
 - a) I think you can forgive someone without having to "like" him or her.
 - (1) Now I know that might sound a little strange at first but let me try to explain why I think this way.
 - b) I also believe that you can "love" someone without having to "like" him or her.
 - (1) Why? Because I see this in the Lord.
 - (a) **Joh 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life".**

- (b) **Psa 97:10** You who love the LORD, hate evil. He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.
- (c) **Pro 8:13** "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverted mouth, I hate.
- (d) You don't have to look very far in God's word to see this "love hate" relationship He has with mankind's actions.
 - (i) **John 3:16** tell us that **he loves the world**, but he hates the wicked deeds done by man.
 - (a) The key is the word used for "love". Once again – it is the word "**agape**". The highest form of love – the "decision" love.
 - (b) Agape is the love that loves even when feelings may say otherwise.
 - (c) It is "forgiveness" love!
 - (i) When we ask the Lord for forgiveness – he loves us enough to grant it, but it doesn't change his hatred for sin.

2. Here is how you know if you have forgiven someone (in my opinion):

- a) If you can pray every prayer, and desire every promise in God's word for the one who offended you – then you have forgiven them.
 - (1) In other words, if you honestly can say that you desire every good thing in the Lord's word for them – that is agape love.
 - (a) But I think it is unrealistic and even cruel to ask a rape victim to sit next to the one who raped them and say that they have not truly forgiven if they do not want to.
 - (b) I think it is unfair and even cruel to require someone who had been abused to sit next to or hang out with his or her abuser and accuse them of unforgiveness if they are uncomfortable.
 - (i) But that does not mean that the person cannot wish the Lord's best for them and that is agape love!
 - (a) Even a sweet, excited little puppy will quit greeting you at the door if you kick him across the room often enough.
 - (i) You may be able to regain his trust, but it will take a while!
 - (ii) So, let's give people time to heal.

3. But true Biblical forgiveness should be given because that is what the Lord does.

- a) Now that doesn't leave us much time but let's take a look at what the Lord says about fasting.
 - (1) Remember – he is contrasting the real from the fake – religion with a true relationship with Him.

ii. **MATTHEW 6:16–18 (NKJV) — 16 "MOREOVER, WHEN YOU FAST, DO NOT BE LIKE THE HYPOCRITES, WITH A SAD COUNTENANCE. FOR THEY DISFIGURE THEIR FACES THAT THEY MAY APPEAR TO MEN TO BE FASTING. ASSUREDLY, I SAY TO YOU, THEY HAVE THEIR REWARD. 17 BUT YOU, WHEN YOU FAST, ANOINT YOUR HEAD AND WASH YOUR FACE, 18 SO THAT YOU DO NOT APPEAR TO MEN TO BE FASTING, BUT**

TO YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN THE SECRET PLACE; AND YOUR FATHER WHO SEES IN SECRET WILL REWARD YOU OPENLY.

- A. Remember that the hypocrite was the one who wore a mask and played the actor.
1. So, for the hypocrite, fasting was just another face!
 - a) They would look as sad and hungry as they possible could to invoke attention and sympathy.
 - b) When it was fake – it was an attention getter and of course had no meaning with the Lord.
- B. Remember that the true meaning of a fast is to give up something that we love to use that time, or energy, or money that we save - to seek the Lord!
1. The “seeking” can be for self, for direction in a big decision, or for someone else, but it is NEVER so that we can be praised for our sacrifice!
 2. The Lord told the disciples to take a bath and clean up and put on some cologne.
 - a) In other words – no one even needs to know that you are fasting!
 - b) Now – do you sin and lose your blessing if someone finds out?
 - (1) That depends on how they find out. If it is through bragging about it – probably.
 - (a) Remember through pretty much most of His Sermon on the Mount – Jesus has been talking about the attitudes of the heart!

III. CONCLUSION

- A. For our prayers to be effective, we must forgive those who have hurt us!
1. **Ephesians 4:32 (NKJV) — 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.**
 2. **James 2:13 (NKJV) — 13 For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.**
- B. If you are going to fast anything in order to seek the Lord do it as you would your giving discretely.