

# "Forgive Us!, Part II"

## Fifth Petition in the Lord's Prayer, Part Two

### 1 Peter 1:1ff

### Matthew 6:14,15

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Last week we saw that an essential part, if not the central part, of the Christian faith is the forgiveness of sins. We confess every Sunday that we believe in the forgiveness of sins. The heart of the Gospel is this: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, and that He rose the third day—all according to the Scriptures. The Gospel, therefore, is the good news. It is the announcement that forgiveness of sins is freely offered to all men on the condition of faith alone, for it is by faith only that we have access to the grace that is freely offered to the whole world. The faith which saves, however, is not what we would might historical faith, the bare assent to the event of history, as you might affirm that you know that George Washington was the first President of the United States. Our catechism puts it this way:

Q21: What is true faith?

A21: True faith is not only a sure knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word,[1] but also a hearty trust,[2] which the Holy Ghost [3] works in me by the Gospel,[4] that not only to others, but to me also, forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, and salvation are freely given by God,[5] merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits.[6]

True faith is worked in us by the Holy Ghost through the Gospel, and therefore cannot be separated from what we call Effectual Calling. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, which means that true faith cannot arise from the flesh, or the sinful. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and the sons of Adam cannot by the flesh, arise to be spiritual sons of God: Ye must be born again, or born from above, or born over again, is the way that the Jesus put it.

That's why the catechism, following the Scriptures, states that true faith has two parts: the knowledge side, by which the historic, objective truth of the Gospel message concerning Christ is perceived to be true: that Jesus Christ truly is the savior who was promised from the creation of the world to take away our sins.

But not only is there a knowledge component to faith, there is also a "hearty trust" component. The Holy Spirit, in effectual calling, also works in us a holy discontent, a holy conviction that we

lie under condemnation and judgment because of our sins, so that we begin to hunger and thirst after righteousness, after God, so that the words of Christ are fulfilled, “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Our very baptism testifies to the necessity of this work of the Holy Spirit, for baptism, although derived from the Old Testament ceremony of purification, was given an enhanced meaning by John the Baptist. “I baptize you with water, but there comes one after me who will baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” The purification signified by the sprinkling of water mingled with the ashes of a red heifer is therefore said to be fulfilled in the cleansing of the soul by the blood and spirit of Christ

This is also explained in 1Peter 1:

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

It is this passage of 1Peter that I want to exposit today. I certainly believe that it will be a blessing and a transformational truth in your life, if you lay hold on the truth that is here. There are three figures of speech used in this passage, and I want to look at these one at a time.

I. The figure of Redemption. “Redeem” means to set free by the payment of a ransom. We are held in bondage by our sin and misery until we come to Christ. Everything that you learned from your mothers and fathers is just so much vanity if you do not understand and know Jesus Christ. Peter was writing to Jews, but even the traditions and the law of the Jews were vanity and useless if they did not believe and trust in Christ.

a. “Empty tradition” or a vain manner of life is what we inherit. The best of man is vanity, and the best of his tradition and knowledge is empty if it is without Christ.

b. No earthly, corruptible thing can deliver us from this emptiness and vanity, because the curse that binds and blinds us is from God, so that we suffer not only for our own sins and rebellion, but from the corruption of our nature.

c. Because the curse and judgment is from God, the price paid must be from God and from heaven. Therefore our Savior was ordained from the foundation of the world, manifest in the time appointed of the father.

d. The end of our redemption is that our faith and hope might be in God. So we are ransomed from a vain and empty hope to a glorious and living hope—in Christ. In the scripture, idols or false gods, are called vanity and vanities, because they give false hope to men, luring them way from Christ. Any thing that you have faith and hope in that is not God is a false God, and all idols are cursed of God, and bring a curse upon those who trust in them.

e. Jesus died to deliver you from the vanity and uselessness, the disillusionment and despair of idolatry.

II. The figure of purification. As I mentioned earlier, this is a symbol of the rite of purification that was practiced under the law, but fulfilled in the Person and work of our Lord Jesus.

a. The institution of this rite is found in Numbers 19:

1 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

2 This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke:

3 And ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face:

4 And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times:

5 And one shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn:

6 And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer.

7 Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean until the even.

8 And he that burneth her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the even.

9 And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin.

10 And he that gathereth the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: and it shall be unto the children of Israel, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among them, for a statute for ever.

----- many things for purification.

17 And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel:

18 And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave:

19 And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even.

20 But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the LORD: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean.

21 And it shall be a perpetual statute unto them, that he that sprinkleth the water of separation shall wash his clothes; and he that toucheth the water of separation shall be unclean until even.

22 And whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean; and the soul that toucheth it shall be unclean until even.

b. Ezekiel said that this rite would be fulfilled in the coming of Christ and the cleansing of sin by Him. Ezekiel 36:25-28 Isaiah says the same thing for the Gentile nations in Isaiah 52.

c. The meaning is found here: Our souls have been purified === what is the defilement from which we needed to be purified: “Obey in the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren.

i. The lies that rest in our souls, the spawn of the devil, who was a liar from the beginning.

ii. Lies manifested in pretended love: phony love, pretended love for our gods, which is really love for ourselves; and phony love for each other, which is just a mask for our sins.

iii. These lies and hypocrisies are what defile the soul, and make it an object of wrath for God, who cannot lie and cannot deny Himself. It is the pure in heart who shall see god, not the phony hypocritical emotionalism that so characterizes the religion of the world.

iv. We are saved to serve one another: not in pretense and lies; but from the heart in truth.

### III. The figure of the New Birth.

a. To be saved is to become a new man in Jesus Christ. The seed which generates this new man is the Word of God, not the corruptible seed of the flesh.

b. To be saved is to have eternal life, and that life begins in you and me through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the work of God through His holy Word, for by the preaching of the Gospel we are called into fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.

And so we have here the meaning of the Fifth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer:

Q126: What is the fifth petition?

A126: And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; that is, be pleased, for the sake of Christ's blood, not to impute to us miserable sinners our manifold transgressions, nor the evil which always cleaves to us;[1] as we also find this witness of Thy grace in us, that it is our full purpose heartily to forgive our neighbor.[2]

The forgiveness and the grace whereby we show to our neighbor is not the price that we pay in order to deserve forgiveness of our own sins, but they are the fruit and evidence that our own sins have been forgiven and that the image of Christ is being formed in us. Amen and Amen. God bless you.