



Christ's School of Prayer
The Prayer of the Righteous Person – Part 4

Well you know one of the problems with watching professional sports on television is that from time to time it inspires middle aged men like myself to pick up a basketball or a football or a baseball and try and throw it around. Maybe join my boys out on the driveway to try and play some basketball, or dust off the clubs and try and play some golf. It inspires us to do that, and then we get out there and it doesn't take very long at all to have that demoralizing realization that I'm no good at this. And the chasm between the guys I watch on television and the reality of what I experience just seems like a gap far to far to ever bridge and I end up saying well let's just leave the sports to the professionals.

That is a reaction I think we often can have as Christians when we open up our Bibles and we look to the topic that we've been studying here for the last few weeks and that is the topic of prayer. We open our Bibles. We see people pray, and when they pray big things happen. I mean you see these soldiers in the name of the Lord. They call out. They ask for God's help and against unthinkable odds, they win the battle. Or you see, you know, a barren woman; she can't have children. She cries out to God. God grants a child and that child grows up to just transform the society for good. Or you see these prophets like Elijah call out to God and specifically request something, and the patterns of the weather actually do precisely what he asks. And you say, wow that's amazing. And so you may be inspired as a Christian and you say well I'm going to start praying a little bit bigger. I'm going to pray more specifically, and you get out there and have that demoralizing experience, and I'm thinking, well my prayers don't seem to work the way those guys and their praying. And part of the motivation maybe even to try and pray big is you'll read statements like in James 5 where it says that Elijah the one who's, you know, praying that the weather obeys. You know, it says hey he's got a nature just like ours. I mean he's just like one of us. And so we say Ok, I'm going to pray and then it doesn't happen. And the context even if you go back to James 5, and you read it, and you see that statement that proceeds it. And you say, oh, it's the prayer of the "righteous person" that is powerful and effective. And you go well there's the fine print right there... the "righteous person", and clearly I'm not righteous. I guess I'll leave the praying to the professionals.

Before we even get to our passage that we've been studying in Luke 11, we need to spend a little bit of time thinking that concept through. The concept of what it means that this qualifier that a righteous person's prayer is powerful and effective. And if that's what we're trying to talk about then what's the deal with that? Because if you went to Sunday school you probably learned that verse there in Romans 3 that says, there's "none righteous, no not one." Well, what's the deal? I mean if the righteous person's prayer is powerful and effective then of course I think that Elijah is a man that doesn't have a nature like mine because I don't see myself like that. That's a topic I want to address real briefly here before we ever get to your passage in Psalms 18.

So grab your Bibles. Call it up and turn to Psalm 18, which if you look at the super-subscription on that Psalm you'll see that's a Psalm of David. Now if I ask a question as you're turning to that passage, was David a righteous man? You should think that sounds like a trick question. I think so. I guess so. I mean I do know the verse that says, and it's repeated multiple times, that he's a man after God's own heart. Surely God seemed to treat him as a special righteous person and yet you've read I and II Samuel. And you know, even if you haven't read I and II Samuel, you know the notorious sins of David, do you not? Big ones – alright impregnating the neighbor's wife and then having her husband killed on the battlefield. Intentionally trying to cover that up. That doesn't seem like the actions of a righteous man. Here's the Psalm. One of the many Psalms that David wrote, and he speaks of the deliverance that God brings. And we can assume safely by reading the rest of what David writes that he's calling out to God for help in the day of calamity. That when he's facing unthinkable odds on the battlefield, he's calling out to God.

Drop down to verse 17 and let's look at how he describes the deliverance he gets from God. Psalm Chapter 18 Verse 17. "He rescued me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me for they were too mighty for me." So that's a situation that's going to demand some prayer. I can't win this. God help me. "They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my support. And you can just put in there, read between the lines, because he was praying and God answered. Well that's great. "He brought me out [Verse 19 says] into a broad

place; he rescued me, because he delighted in me.” What do you mean by that David? “The LORD dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he has rewarded me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and I have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his rules were before me, and his statutes I did not put away from me. I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from guilt. So the LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, of my hands...” Now there’s the bookends. We’ve had it repeated. His righteousness, the cleanness of his hands, and before you try to over spiritualize that or put it in some logical category he makes clear in the ensuing verses, we’re talking about him doing what God asked. Humm.

Even reading that much and don’t close this yet. We’re going to continue in this passage, but you’ve got to recognize that whatever it means in Romans 3, that there is “none righteous, no, not one.” And then over in James 5, it says well you know a “righteous” person’s prayer it’s powerful and effective. And here’s David saying, I called out when the enemy was mightier than me and God answered me because of my righteousness. There must be two definitions for righteousness here in the Bible, and you’d be right.

There is an absolute kind of a comparative with God’s righteousness, that there’s “no one righteous, no, not one.” There is no one without blame. Several passages in scripture that tell us that with great clarity. And yet he’s making very clear that his prayers were answered and God responded to him according to his righteousness. So apparently some kind of righteousness that he says I qualify for... hum? With the merciful [Verse 25] you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless; with the purified, you show yourself pure.” Now that’s an interesting twist there. Blameless, you can say well that rings a bell. In the New Testament it says the pastors and the ministry leaders are supposed to be blameless, and if we’re talking about absolute blamelessness – if we’re talking about absolute righteousness - well then of course, we would have pastor-less and ministry-less churches because no one’s that. We must be talking about a different kind - a secondary - some kind of relative sense. But instead of saying with the pure you show yourself pure, he says, “with the purified, you show yourself pure;”

Now we’re starting to get a hint as to what this is all about. There must be a difference between those that are sinful, but have their sins purified. “...with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous for you save the humble.” There’s another hint. There must be something about humility that’s required for people like David who we know has sinned and sinned greatly, and yet sees himself as righteous in keeping God’s rules. “You save the humble, but the haughty eyes you bring down. For it is you who light my lamp;” which probably means more than just the lamp or the light of life. There must be something there that makes a dirty man, an unclean man, clean. And it says “God lightens my darkness” which is more than just being brought out into the plane level broad place when the darkness of his enemies surround him. There’s something here, some double entendre at least to say, hey there is some meaning here regarding even the darkness of David’s own heart because he freely admitted that, and when confronted with his sin, he saw it.

Now look back at Verse 22 for a second. “For all his rules were before me, and his statutes I did not put away...” Now when you think about David 600 years after the giving of the Law of Moses, and you think, well, what were the rules that God gave through his servant Moses there - the Torah, the law. You’ve got to recognize well there were lots of laws there that related to the moral standards of God. And if you think, did you keep all of those? Well, of course you didn’t. But there’s a whole other set of laws that related to the moral laws that were part of the ceremonies of how you dealt with the problem of your moral failure in trying to make restoration with God. All these symbols, all these sacrifices, all these offerings, all these things you did because God knew everyone was going to sin and there was a response to sin that I require. And so, the righteous person in a relative sense, the righteous person in the secondary sense, is now someone who’s sinless. We’re not even talking about, well this person’s sinned really bad and this person didn’t sin as bad. Well the person who didn’t sin as bad I guess in a relative sense he’s more righteous. That’s not what we’re talking about. We’re talking about the person that when they sin they respond according to the rules. And the rules of responding to my sin have to deal with things like conviction of sin, confession of sin, repentance from sin. Now when you do that God takes the impure, and he purifies him. He takes those that are guilty, and he says, now I count you righteous. He says now you’ve responded to your sin the way you should.

Let me illustrate. The king that came before King David was, King Saul. If you want to look at Saul, and you say what kind of man was he? Was he a righteous man? You'd say well I guess if you just speak about what kinds of sin people commit, he seems less sinful than David because David he's having moral failure and he's even a murderer by proxy. And Saul I mean he had his problems and he was prideful, and he had issues. And I suppose when God sent him into battle with the instructions of Samuel to take care of the Amalekites, he compromised, and he didn't do exactly what he was told. Yeah, it wasn't as bad. Then you could say well David's a bigger sinner than Saul and yet David is called a man after God's own heart, and Saul is one who Samuel says the Lord has rejected because Saul did not keep the rules of God when you sin. Because when Samuel comes and confronts Saul, he says look you didn't do what I asked you to do. You didn't do what the Lord required. And he said well I've got this reason, the excuse, and just get off my back. I've got reasons for doing what I do. He doesn't feel conviction. He doesn't confess it, and he doesn't repent. David on the other hand had a similar situation with a much worse sin. When Nathan comes in and says you are the man. You're the sinner. He doesn't do anything as to what Saul does. His response is conviction, confession and repentance, and therefore David is counted the righteous man. And Saul is counted the rejectable man. The sinner, the Lord's prayers are not going to be effective and powerful, but with a righteous man it is. And I can do the same with Elijah though his sins aren't as dramatic. I can show you the sins of Elijah in the Bible, and yet he's counted a righteous man because he kept the rules of God.

Now if I'm going to pray prayers that are big league prayers. And I should. I should want to pray as the Bible beckons me to pray. Prayers that are powerful and effective. I need to make sure I qualify as a righteous person. How do I do that? Well I'm a sinful person. You're a sinful person. We've committed sins. We commit sins. I better make sure that when it comes to my Christian life I'm doing something that deals with that issue. And when Jesus teaches his disciples to pray after hallowed be your name, after your kingdom come, after give us this day our daily bread, he says now let's talk about the issue that you're going to need to deal with every single day in your Christian life.

Let's talk about how you respond to the sin in your life.

Now Luke 11, in Luke Chapter 11 we're having the disciples ask Jesus after his move from the northern region of Galilee to the southern region of Judea and Jerusalem, and they ask him, would you teach us to pray? Not like in the Sermon on the Mount to the crowds. He teaches now his disciples how to pray. The words are a little different. Same structure is in place, and we have a very brief section, one verse in Verse 4, on dealing with sin, and here's how it's worded. Verse 4. Luke 11:4. "...and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation." That is plenty for us to tackle this morning. "...and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who in indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation." The concepts of temptation, forgiveness, sin, these issues laid out for us in one verse remind us that when we pray we need to think about our sin. Let me take it a step further. We need to feel a conviction regarding our sin. Number one on your outline if you're taking notes, and I wish that you would. Jot it down this way.

1. Pray to Bring Conviction of Sins

I need to be praying at some point in my prayers with a sensitivity to the fact that I am a sinner and I have recently sinned. I need to get that in my mind, and it's not so hard when we take Verse 2 in Luke 11 seriously. "...hallowed be your name." Remember we said that's the idea of I'm not changing anything about God. I'm not even requesting anything of God for him to do because he can't make himself anymore holy than he is, but in my mind I need to make God as holy as he is and try to exalt my view of him. And when you do that if you linger long enough in putting God in his proper place, there should be as a natural reaction to that – conviction of sin. I'll feel it. What I thought. What I did. How I acted.

Four names, jot these four names down. Isaiah. When Isaiah sees an exalted view of God, seated on his throne, his glory filling the temple, what does he say? He says, schzamm! This is great! I get to see God's holiness. This is so awesome! High five!! Where's Jesus? Is that what he says? No. His response is what? "Woe to me! I am ruined. I have unclean lips. I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips;" I see our sin and I see my sin.



Second name, Peter. Luke 5. He sees the Messiah, the God man, the Son of Man from Daniel 7 and he sees him do something that expresses he has the power of almighty God. And here's all these fish go right into the net, and so Peter says, this is great! You can make fish go into... we need to take this on the road! You know how much money we could make on this? This is awesome! No he doesn't say any of that. He says, "Away from me. Depart from me for I'm a sinful man." He sees the greatness of God, and he processes that, and he feels his own sin.

How about this, ladies. You went through the study of Judges. You remember Chapter 13 when we encountered Manoah and his wife and they were now being instructed about the baby they were going to have. And the angel of the Lord in a very strange situation accepting worship, and offering, and speaking first person for God. And having this display of God's glory, Manoah doesn't say, this is awesome! We're seeing a manifestation of God here! He didn't say that. Here's Manoah's words from Judges 13. "We shall surely die, for we have seen God." That's not the reaction a lot of us have when we take this plastic view of God and start to think about it. Who's a lot like us, we move as Pastor Mark was trying to preach from that great text in Psalms 50, and we bring him to our level. No. When you see the real transcendent God for who he is, naturally we start to see our own sin.

One more, Job, the fourth name. Study Job 42 sometime. After all this frustration Job has about his injustice and how all these things that happened to him aren't fair. Now he was really godly when we left him in the second chapter, but all the ensuing chapters he's not doing so well. He's frustrated and bitter, and he's pounding his fist on the table saying, if only I could have God my day in court. I've got a complaint. I've got a bone to pick with you God. God shows up and he goes, oh you want to talk with me. And he manifests his glory through a revelation regarding who he is and what he made. And Job's response is, well that's fantastic! Thanks for calibrating my view of you. Here's his response in Job 42. "My ear had heard of you, but now my eyes see you." This is all poetic language. I get clarity about who you are, "Therefore, I despise myself, and I repent."

Just four examples. We could go through the Bible and find more. And the point is, the more you see the greatness and glory and majesty and holiness and purity and knowledge and expanse of God in your prayer life, the more you should naturally start to see conviction of sin. It'll happen and if not, all you've got to do is look at the middle of Verse 4. Can you look at what he says in the middle of this passage? "...forgive us our sins," and as almost a matter-of-fact statement, "for we ourselves forgive everyone that is indebted to us." Now the Bible has a lot to say about the necessity of those who are forgiven, being forgiving. Lot in the Bible about that. And here he says, well when you pray ask God for forgiveness, and you should remember of course you are forgiving everybody who's wronged you. Should I read that until you feel some conviction about that? "...forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us." Do you? Really? You can't even read the model prayer without feeling conviction. When you think about God and then you start to think about his word. These two things: Biblical praying, with all the Biblical principles that we can think of that we've learned recently – they'll bring conviction of sin. Cause I can't think about the fact that I naturally forgive the people that wrong me. I don't, and neither do you. This is a struggle. This is hard.

Jesus tells parables about it. Look at the servant who's forgiven a just almost a comedic amount of money, and then he finds a fellow slave that owes him some money, and he beats him and puts him in prison. Remember that story Jesus told? And he says how dare this person receive such grace and such mercy and such forgiveness, not show that to his fellow slave? Or as Colossians 3 puts it, you better be bearing with each other. Forgiving each other. Just as Christ forgave you. I can't even read the model prayer without feeling conviction. That reminds me. My view of God and my view of scripture in my praying, if I think rightly about God, and I bring into that prayer Biblical praying and Biblical principles I start to feel conviction of sin. And if that doesn't work let me give you a third suggestion. Write this down.

Psalm 139, Verse 24 and 25. If all that doesn't get to you, I would say well you probably haven't lingered long enough. But if you still need some help with this, pray the prayer of Psalm 139:24 & 25, which simply says, "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! See if there is any grievous way in me," It's kind of like your teenager coming into your den there, your family room there, and saying, hey mom dad, is there anything I ever do that grieves you? Pull up a chair, right? Are you kidding me? Of course. Let me alphabetize. Let me start... what's, where do I start? Of course. You want to tee it up for God? You just start praying this prayer. "Search me God." I want you to look not just through my behavior and my words; I want you

to look into the imagination of my own thoughts. Is there anything there that grieves you? You don't think God's going to answer that prayer within about 10 seconds? Oh, he will. Linger on the exaltation of God, and your prayer time will produce conviction. Make sure you're praying Biblical truths like I know I can't ask for forgiveness without forgiving others, and you'll say, wow there's a lot of people I have trouble forgiving. God forgive me for my unforgiveness. That's just one example. And if all else fails just go to God and say, God I haven't been very conscious of my sins today. Is there anything I've done? Is there anything I've said? Is there any thought that I've had that has grieved you? Anything that's less than holy in my life, would you point that out to me? I dare you to pray those prayers and try and come out of it without conviction. Real Christians are going to feel convicted at that point. And that's great, cause you want to pray the prayers of a righteous person. And a righteous person in the Bible, relatively speaking, in the secondary sense. Alright "there's none righteous, no, not one." In an absolute sense, you don't qualify. But you want to pray the prayers of a righteous person? You've got to start with conviction. You don't start with conviction; we're not going anywhere with God.

Let's look at the first half of Verse 4. A very specific request. Forgive us our sin. Is that what it says? If I read it wrong you help me out now. Forgive us our sin. Oh, there's an "s" I forgot. "Forgive us our sins." Let's get very specific. You want to pray the prayers of the righteous person and you should want that and you can be that. It's not because you haven't sinned this week. It's because you're dealing rightly with sin, which starts with conviction. I taught you. Here's how we can have conviction in our praying. Now we need to start confessing. Let's put it this way. Number two you need to...

2. Pray Your Confession of Sins

What are those things that you've done? Confess them. Now I know you know this verse. I trust that you do. 1 John 1:9. And it says this; if you confess your sins he is faithful and just to forgive your sins and to cleanse you for all unrighteousness. Let's put it in the first person plural. Really, state it accurately. "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now you may have heard this ad nauseum, but let me have you jot it down again. If you don't have this in your mind well enough and clear enough to teach it to someone else. The Greek word is helpful in this regard. New Testament written in Greek and the original language puts it this way. It's a compound word and you know both components. The first component is homo. Ok, I know you know that word, and the second word comes from logos. It's the word loggia. Logos is word. Loggia is my dialogue or my speech or my statement. Homologgia. Homo means the same as opposed to hetero – the same. Homologgia that's what translates into the English word confession. Homologgia means I am, basically, I am saying the same thing that God is saying. When I say does anything in my life grieve you? Now before I ask you that question and brought to mind anything in my life I wasn't thinking the same things about those things that you think. Those things you see as sin. Those things you see as grief. You grieve over them. I want to grieve over those things. I want to see those things as sin. And loggia is stating that. That's helpful.

Here's a reference to jot down in light of that. Hosea Chapter 14 Verse 2. Hosea 14:2. Old Testament minor prophet. If you know your Old Testament and you know your prophets, you know this is the guy that was asked to marry a lady named Gomer. Gomer was a gal who was unfaithful to Hosea. Hosea was the prophet. Gomer was the unfaithful one. She "played the harlot" as it's put. She becomes a prostitute and Hosea is told by God to pursue that gal and win her back. And the whole illustration here, living illustration, was to show how God chases down an unfaithful Israel and brings her back and at the end of the book, Chapter 14, the last chapter in the book, here's how it's said. It's Verse 1. I should quote first which says shuwb. In Hebrew "shuwb" is the word repent, turn. Return is how the ESV translates this. "Return, to the LORD." Here I'll quote it for you. "Return, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity." Now here it comes, Verse 2, and "Take your words" with you. Love that. "Take your words" with you.

Some of us can go into prayer, feel conviction and feel bad about it. That's not enough. We need to express to God, I agree with you that what I've done, what I have thought, what I have imagined, what I've indulged in, what I have said, how I responded was wrong. I see it the way you see it. As best as I can see it the way you see it, I see it as wrong. I'm confessing that what I've done is sin.

Now I'm preaching to a culture into a generation that has a real problem with this. We want to speak in generalities. That's why I put "s" at the end of all the points here this morning. It's not about sin in general. It's about sins



specifically. Forgive us our sins. That's so important for us to realize. We need to spend some time lingering in prayer, confessing specific sins and not having attached to it, but, or this is the reason, or I did that because. That's what Saul did and he was not seen as a righteous man. David, a sinner, was seen as a righteous man because he confessed his sins. When Nathan said you're the man, he said you're right I am the man. I'm a sinner. I've done wrong. May God have mercy on me. May he forgive me. David wrote so many great Psalms about how happy is the person that the Lord does not count transgressions against him. It's not that you didn't sin. It's just that you're counted as righteous because God is willing to take a contrite person with confession, and say, I'm just and faithful to my promise. If you confess it, I'll forgive it. I'll cleanse you from all unrighteousness. That's good news. Isn't it great to know that you can today take what you did this morning and yesterday, and you can go to God with a sincere confession, and with a word you can have it obliterated. God can say I'm not going to hold that against you. The problem is a lot of people don't see their specific sins.

There's a great story there in John 9 where Jesus heals the blind man. And there's this whole you know ruckus about whether Jesus should be put out of the synagogue. It's an interesting story, and at the end of it Jesus is there basically teaching the Pharisees who run the synagogue saying, listen, you guys have got a problem. And they catch on. Second to last verse in John 9. They say, are you telling us that we're blind? Clearly we've moved from ophthalmology to spiritual realities. You cannot see God for who he is. You don't have a right perspective on truth. And he's saying, the Pharisees say, are you saying we're blind? Listen to the last verse of John 9. So helpful. Verse 41. "Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, [if you were blind] you would have no guilt.'" First time we've had that introduced. Guilt. You would not be guilty. "but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains." That's a mouthful of theology. Let me say that again, "If you were blind." In other words, if you would say it and admit the truth that you have a problem between you and God - there's a barrier, and you can't connect with God. If you could see that you need that reconciliation, then your guilt would be removed. But because you say, we don't have a problem, then your guilt remains.

I quoted that Sunday school verse which is so critical for us. 1 John 1:9. You know what Verse 10 says and Verse 8 says? They both say this, if you say you have no sin. Try and make God out to be a liar. Come on. Of course you do. You can't think that you do not have sin. Let me read both verses for you. Verse 8. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." Verse 10. "If we say we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar, and his word is not in us." See the problem, sandwiched between the greatest truth that we can really revel in as Christians, that with a word of confession you can be forgiven are two verses reminding us of the basic chronic problem of humanity. I don't want to see my sin. I don't think I have sin. You have to linger in prayer long enough, exalting God, praying Biblically and asking God for conviction of sins to see your sins for what they are, and then, actually confess them. Return to God and bring words with you. Tell God what you've done, and he will forgive.

Speaking of David, a sinful man, who's counted as righteous in that great Psalm, Psalm 32. Listen how he puts it. "I acknowledge my sin to you, [he says to God] and I did not cover my iniquity," A lot of us do that in our prayers. We don't want to talk about it. We don't want to bring it up. We don't want to admit it. "I said I will confess my transgressions to the Lord and then you forgave me the iniquity of my sin. Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you in a time when you may be found;" Do you see the interesting juxtaposition of the descriptors there? What do you mean the godly? Now you're talking about sinners here. I understand. Sinners can pray and get their sins forgiven. Let the "godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found." We're talking about the prayer of forgiveness. That's it. Righteous and godly people admit their sin and confess it. They experience conviction and then they agree with God that they have done wrong. Pray your confessions of sin, and I advise you to be specific.

One more great verse to jot down if you are a copious note taker, Proverbs 28:13. "Whoever conceals his transgressions [which we often do, even in our praying] he will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy."

By the way some of the theologically astute among us, or at least those who want to engage in debates in theology, will often say I'm having a problem with this whole message because I believe that when I was saved I was justified by God and all my sins, past, present and future were forgiven. So all this quotation of 1 John 1:9 and even your



statement here about Proverbs 28, I don't know. I just don't know that that's really applicable to me. You keep applying in your sermon here John 1:9 like I need that, and like God's going to forgive me only when I confess it, and I'm thinking to myself, I'm already forgiven. Careful with that line of thinking.

Maybe this will help. Little sidebar illustration here. When Jesus is in the upper room, he starts out this scene right before he's going to be betrayed and crucified. And the disciples there are gathered, all the twelve of the apostles. Jesus comes in and he takes an apron and he girds himself with it, and he gets down and he starts washing feet. Now that seems strange in our day, but of course in their dusty streets with their open toed sandals and all these guys would come in and that would be like, Ok, why do you need to clean feet? Because the table is about a foot off the ground. They didn't have chairs. They would lay down on their side, and their feet would be dangling by people. And so if you're going to have a meal at someone's house usually what someone did is have a servant come around, or maybe a teenage son come around, and start washing everyone's feet as an act of courtesy so that when they sat down at the table everyone's dangling feet around the table they're all going to be clean. Someone's got to wash the feet.

Now these are twelve guys plus Jesus. They don't have any servants. And there are no teenage sons to say, hey wash everybody's feet. So there they are with 30 feet about to have a meal, and Jesus takes the apron and girds himself and starts washing their feet. But of course it never would have been recorded were it not for a spiritual lesson. And the lesson was brought right up to the surface when Jesus comes up to Peter, and Peter, who we would expect something interesting from him responds by saying, oh no, no no no no. You're not going to wash my feet. You're the Son of God. Of course you're not going to wash my feet. And you remember Jesus' response? He said, that's so respectful of you. Thank you. That's kind of you. That what he says? He says, if you don't let me wash your feet I'll have nothing to do with you. I'll have no part with you and so Peter almost comically goes, well then pour it over my head, man. If it's about me and you being connected here, wash my whole body. And Jesus says, Ok. No. What does he say? No. You are already clean. You don't need your body washed again. You're already clean. What I need to do is to wash your feet.

Now to know that he was teaching a spiritual principle he then says, oh wait a minute, there is one here that's not clean. It's the one who's going to betray me. Now follow me - justification - sanctification. When he looks at the twelve he sees eleven of them to use our terms as justified. Their sins are forgiven. Are their sins forgiven, past, present and future? I suppose you could say that. They are absolutely right with God and adopted into his family, but there's one that is not. He's there for all the wrong reasons. He's there as a phony. He's not clean. But he's doing this little exercise to show that when you walk through this world and you pick up dirt in your clean life as a saint and a forgiven one, you're going to need to deal with that. So strongly that he put it as, I'll have no part with you if you don't clean your feet. How're we going to have a meal together if you don't clean your feet? And he really makes a great parallel - one is greater - one is lesser - justification. You are my child. You are forgiven. But you've got to deal with your dirty feet. It's a great lesson for us.

Because if you think because your sins are forgiven, past, present and future and you want to look at 1 John 1:9 and say well that has nothing to do with Christians. All I've got to say, is if you think you can go through your Christian life without a real thoughtful concern about the sins and confession as necessary to repair relationship because you're hanging your hat on the fact that you are a justified child of God, all I've got to say is try that in your marriage. Offend your wife and when you know she is hurting because of your stupid behavior, just say, you know what I just, you walk the Nile and said better or worse, I mean I know you're not going to divorce me. Try that. And then write me and let me know how that goes. Not very well. I don't care if my wife is committed to never divorcing me, if I offend her and do something wrong that grieves her, I better bring some words with me and make it right. Are you tracking with that?

I don't care if you're a justified follower of God and you know that you're secure and you've been justified by Christ and his cross. Doesn't mean that you don't have to get on your face before God this afternoon and confess your sins if you want fellowship with him. It's important for us to catch. Pray your confessions for sin. You have to confess it and forsake it. You have to have a kind of break with it that moves beyond just agreeing with God about it. But there's a forsaking and that's colorfully illustrated for us in the bottom of Verse 4 in Luke Chapter 11 where it says, there's something else we need to be praying. "And lead us not into temptation." "Lead us not into temptation." You can see this can't you? God I've sinned and I want to agree with you. That's what it is to be



forgiven – it's to come to you with a confessed heart. But I not only to be a confessed heart. I not only want to confess to you my wrong; I want to repent. And repent has something to do with my turning from sin so much so that I say, oh God I don't want to ever be led back into a situation where I might do that again. Don't lead me into temptation. Number 3. That's the way we also need to use prayer. We need to ...

3. Pray as a Protection From Sins

Pray to bring conviction of sins. Pray your confessions for sins and then pray as a protection from sins. There's a lot of people, and I've got to think there's many of us sitting here today, who feel like if I just agree with God that it's wrong, and I want repaired fellowship with God, that's enough. It's not enough. There's got to be a natural compliment to that that says, now I don't even want to get close to it again. I don't want to be led anywhere near the temptation that I would have to bring again a prayer of confession for this.

Now I know it doesn't work this way anymore – when I was little we'd get our lunch money for the week. And I suppose for the sake of stewardship we might have the whole week of lunch money ready so that we can manage it throughout the week and get through the week and figure out how we're going to spend it at lunch and all that. I remember that as a kid – my lunch money. Now let's say I've got the whole week of lunch money on Monday morning at breakfast and then off to school I go, and at the end of the day I come home and at dinner I sit there with my family and I say, hey, I've got a confession to make. Well what's your confession? Little Mike Fabarez, elementary school Mike. Well, I lost my lunch money. You did? You lost your lunch money? Yeah, I didn't even get lunch today cause I didn't have any money. What do you mean you lost your lunch money? Well, I kind of got pulled into this little gambling ring of elementary school kids between second and third periods. I got in this huge card game and I just lost it all. You did? Yeah, and I was afraid to tell you and I didn't really want to tell you. And I know you probably don't approve of me playing poker between second and third period, but I've got to confess it man. I'm sorry. Will you forgive me? Can you give me lunch money for Tuesday through Friday? I need to restore that. I'd like to eat tomorrow. Ah son, that's great. You could've hid that from us. You could've gone all week and not told us. You could've stole money from somewhere to get you... thanks so much for confessing that. Gambling, poker, when did you start doing - talk to me about that. Yeah, I know I've got to get a lot better. I've bluffed way too often. I'm going to go back tomorrow, and I'm going to try to make sure I don't lose any money tomorrow.

We can confess our sins and not pray, Lord, I'm sorry about that. It was wrong. I don't want to even be near it in the future. I don't want to see this happen again. There are a lot of people that confess their sins, and they don't forsake it. They don't turn from it. You want a passage to study on your own. How about the 7th Chapter of 2nd Corinthians. 2 Corinthians 7 You want real Biblical repentance? It's not just feeling bad about your sin. It's a grief that leads to repentance. It's a godly grief that leads us to repentance and the repentance is described this way – it produces indignation. At what? At our own sin. A kind of zeal, a kind of longing to make it right. And before you think that everyone in this room agrees with what I'm saying here you need to recognize if you say listen I want forgiveness from the problem and the consequences, but I really don't want forgiveness from the activity or at least I'd like to engage in the activity, but not cross the line. In other words, translation, I'd like to get as close to sin without actually making you mad God. The goal of prayer in dealing with sin in your life is not to say Ok, I fell off the horse I want to get back in the game, and I want to get as close to sin as possible without going off the edge. Matter of fact, it's just the opposite. I want to be as far from that sin as possible. I don't even want to be in a context that would lead me to temptation to commit that sin. Before you nod and say, well I agree with that. Most people in this room do not agree with that because that makes you a freak. You're a freak. You are a zealot! You are a legalist! Come on man, the Bible doesn't say you can't go there. You can't participate with that. You can't hang with those things. Come on, the Bible doesn't say that.

2 Corinthians 7. Coming off the end of Chapter 6, which says, come out from among them. Be separate. Be different. In that first verse, perfect in holiness - the sanctification you're called to have. Do it with fear. Make sure you see sin for what it is, and when you repent, as he describes it for them. They had repented and they were indignant about their sin, and they were longing to clear themselves in their zeal. You will be called a legalist, I guarantee it, if you take this line seriously and "lead us not into temptation." Cause you're going to be praying to stay away from things that will cause you to sin.

Not just to get heavy. I know you already think it's heavy, but let me give you a heavy passage here. Hebrews Chapter 10. Hebrews 10. Matter fact this would be worth turning to, Verse 29. They'd all be worth it if we had the time. Hebrews 10:29 just so you can highlight it. Bracket it. Star it. I think of this as though one of these sets of parents that were on the stage with their little child today were to meet you out on the patio today and say, would you like to hold my baby? Oh, yeah, I would love that. And you take that baby up in your arms and you're holding that baby and then for some strange reason some high school, junior high school girls over there pull out jump ropes, and they're doing double Dutch over by the donut table and you go, ah, I used to do that in school. I love that and so you take that baby over there, and you start double ditching and you drop the baby. Ohhh, so sorry. And Mom is horrified. What are you doing? Well, I just love double Dutch. Yeah, but probably shouldn't be holding a baby and doing Dutch. You might drop it, and you just dropped by baby. I'm really sorry. I will pick your baby up and now next time I'm going to be really careful. Why would you take someone else's child and risk their injury just to do something you want to do when in reality your concern should be I don't want to hurt this person's baby. I will not put myself in a situation that puts their child in harms way. You follow this illustration?

There's a great verse in the passage I've been quoting in 1 John 1:9. I quoted 8. I quoted 9. I quoted 10. How about Verse 7? It says "... and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from our sin." If you realize the price that it takes to forgive your sin. That Jesus had to die. That God's son had to die. And you think, how do I feel about temptation? Or putting sin, or I should say putting myself in harms way to commit sin; putting myself in a temptation – a situation of temptation - then you can understand the thrust of this verse. Verse 29 when it says, "How much worse punishment, do you think will be deserved [this is Verse 29] to the one who tramples under foot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified..." Profane. Do you know what that word means? Something that is sacred, and exalted and holy. You treat it as normal and common and no big deal. Like you're holding your purse playing double Dutch. This isn't your purse. This is a child. In this case when you put yourself in a dangerous precarious situation that may lead to sin, it's the sin that pinned Christ to the cross. He shed his blood to forgive you of that sin, why would you involve yourself in a high-risk situation like that?

One more word, "...and has outraged the Spirit of grace?" Oh it's about grace. God will forgive me. All I have to do is confess it. "He is faithful and just to forgive my sin, cleanse me from all unrighteousness." You need to be praying for protection from sin. Which if you do it, will make you a freak. People will think, ah, he's just too careful. Don't you know we're forgiven? We're children of God. It's about grace. It's like a legalist. If you study 2 Corinthians 7 as I invited you to do when you go home, you'll see that if you take that repentance seriously and even if you get into Chapter 6 at the end of Chapter 6 is starts with the unequally yoked passage and you go all the way through 7:2 you'll say all of that passage will lead me to live a lifestyle that avoids double Dutch even if I say, well I'm going to be careful. And you'll look at Godly people who livet this prayer out, they won't do the kinds of things that you do. They won't engage in those high risk situations that you know will put you in temptation. And I know you'll call them freaks. But join the club if you would, if you care about "trampling under foot the Son of God" or "profaning the blood of the covenant" or "outraging the Spirit of grace." Be real careful. Pray as a protection from sins.

Three words we've dealt with: conviction, confession, protection. Protection, by the way, I know I said at the beginning of this sermon, conviction, confession and repentance. Well repentance means that I'm going to look at my future with a concern about protection from repeating that sin. Will I repeat it? You might. But I'm coming out of prayer praying, God don't lead me back to any temptation. I'm focusing on removing myself from high-risk situations. I just don't want to do it. It's too risky. You're prayer life is going to stagnate. It's going to stall and it will stumble if you fail to deal with your sins. On the other hand you can have a powerful and effectual prayer life as a righteous man or women. Not based on how much sin you avoided this week, although I trust you will avoid a lot less when you start praying these kinds of prayers. But you will be considered righteous by God if you keep his rules. And his rules involve things like, being convicted of sin, confessing your sin and repenting of your sins. Which means you're praying prayers that will protect you from the reoccurrence of falling into sin and temptation. Doesn't mean you haven't sinned lately, but it means you sincerely and whole-heartedly deal with it.

There's a young man named Philip Bliss over a hundred years ago, who ran into D.L. Moody and that's always a good thing back in the day. Here was this young man who was gifted in music and he had started an education in music and Moody gets a hold of him. He lived a short life. He died before he was forty. But when Moody got to



know Philip Bliss, he said you've really got to use your skill and your talent and what God has invested in you with music to write some music that will make a difference for the kingdom. And Philip did, and Philip Bliss wrote a lot of hymns that our parents and grandparents may have sang. Some that you probably know when we sing seasonally. But there is one hymn that I love the most from Philip Bliss written in 1873. Maybe you haven't heard of it.

Let me close by quoting it for you - three verses. Simply called "More Holiness Give Me". You want to have a heart that prays the prayer forgive us our sins. We want to make sure we don't violate your word, and we don't want to be lead into temptation, please, help us. Then you're going to resonate with these words.

More holiness give me, more striving within.
More patience in suffering, and more sorrow for sin.
More faith in my Savior, and more sense of His care.
More joy in His service, and more purpose in prayer.

More gratitude give me, more trust in the Lord.
More pride in His glory, and more hope in His word.
More tears for His sorrows, and more pain at his grief.
More meekness in trial, and more praise for relief.

More purity give me, more strength to overcome.
More freedom from earth's stains, and more longing for home.
More fit for the kingdom, and more used I would be.
More blessed, more holy, more, Savior like thee.

Let's pray. God may our hearts resonate much more with the desire to be holy knowing that our justification was earned completely and 100% by the death of Christ on the cross, by his life in our stead. But God we want to be sensitive to sin. We may be clean. We may be washed. But like Jesus illustrated our feet get pretty dirty just walking through just one day in the sinful world so God we need conviction of sin. Grant us in our prayers that experience of feeling increasing conviction for the wrongs that we do. And then God let us be very clear and articulate about our confession. Let us agree with you about the sins we've committed. And then God I ask that we be the kinds of people that pray you wouldn't lead us into temptation. There would be a concern about how we live our lives tomorrow and next week and next month. Grant us that passion for holiness I pray. Give us now a sense of that and progress in that, as you answer those prayers in Jesus name. Amen.