REVD. DR. D. J. AJITH KUMAR

A Heart of Prayer and a Life of Forgiveness

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KEY VERSE
"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." – Matthew 6:12

READINGS
Daniel 9:1–5,17-19; Psalm 132; Hebrews 13:18-21; Matthew 6:9–15

Introduction

Prayer and forgiveness form the very core of Christian life and discipleship. They are not just disciplines of faith but lifelines to God and to one another. A prayerful heart nurtures communion with God, while a forgiving heart builds reconciliation with others. Jesus, in teaching the Lord's Prayer, intertwines both these aspects inseparably: we pray to the Father, and as we do so, we forgive as we have been forgiven. In the contemporary world, where grudges, divisions, and brokenness prevail, the church is called to be a community of prayer and forgiveness. This sermon explores the theme: "A Heart of Prayer and a Life of Forgiveness," through four lenses drawn from our readings today: the posture of Daniel's confession, the covenantal promises reflected in Psalm 132, the pastoral call to prayer in Hebrews, and the Lord's model prayer in Matthew.

Confession and Intercession: The Heart of a Prayer Warrior- (Daniel 9:1–5, 17–19)

The prayer of Daniel is not merely a personal devotion but a deep act of intercession. He does not come to God claiming innocence but confessing the sins of his people: "We have sinned and done wrong, acted wickedly and rebelled." (v.5). Daniel's prayer shows that true prayer begins with humility. There is no blaming, no self-justification. Instead, there is a heartfelt repentance, acknowledging communal failure. In today's polarized times, this is a lesson for us all. We often speak of others' sins but seldom confess our own. Daniel teaches us to approach God not from a position of pride but penitence. Moreover, Daniel's prayer ends with a passionate plea: "O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive!" (v.19). It is a cry not only for deliverance but for restoration. The heart of prayer is not simply asking for things, but pleading for God's mercy and justice to renew His people.

A mother once said, "I never pray harder than when my child is sick." True prayer comes from a place of deep love and desperation. Daniel, like a spiritual parent, carried the burden of his people and brought them to God.

God's Dwelling and Our Faithfulness – (Psalm 132)

Psalm 132 recounts David's devotion and God's covenantal response. David longed to build a house for the Lord, a place of divine dwelling. God, in return, promised a lasting throne for David's descendants. In this exchange, we see a relationship of faithfulness and presence. David's desire for God's dwelling reflects a heart attuned to divine presence. This is also the heart of prayer: the desire to be with God, to make space in our lives for His presence. In our fast-paced lives, we often crowd out this space. We prioritize activity over intimacy. Yet, the Psalm reminds us that God desires to dwell with His people. Our hearts are to become His resting place. The church, in turn, becomes a spiritual house through which God's promises are made manifest. To live in a spirit of forgiveness is

also to make room for God's presence. Bitterness and unforgiveness crowd out the Spirit's work in us. Just as David desired to make a home for God, we too are called to clear the clutter of resentment and open our hearts to divine love. Forgiveness is like cleaning a guest room. If we want God to dwell in us, we must make room – and often that means removing old baggage.

A Life of Integrity and Prayer – (Hebrews 13:18–21)

The epistle reading gives us a glimpse into the pastoral life of the early church: "Pray for us," the writer says, "for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honourably in all things." Here, prayer is not a ritual but a way of sustaining Christian life and leadership. The church prays for its leaders, and the leaders pray for the church. There is mutual dependence and support. This dynamic fosters both accountability and grace. The benediction that follows is powerful: "May the God of peace… make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will." (v.21) This is the outcome of a life soaked in prayer – spiritual maturity, peace, and purpose. Forgiveness also emerges from this completeness. Those who are made whole in Christ do not live with fractured relationships. They seek restoration, healing, and unity.

A pastor once said, "I cannot preach peace if I harbour grudges. My prayers are only as strong as my willingness to forgive."

The Prayer Jesus Taught and the Life He Modelled – (Matthew 6:9–15)

The Lord's Prayer is not simply a form of words but a framework for life. Jesus teaches us to pray beginning with the Father, to seek His kingdom and provision, and then to turn to the inner world of relationships: "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." This is the only petition Jesus later emphasizes: "For if you forgive others… your heavenly Father will also forgive you." (v.14) Thus, forgiveness is not optional; it is foundational. We cannot be people of prayer unless we are also people of forgiveness. Many prayers remain unanswered not because God is unwilling, but because our hearts are clogged with unforgiveness. Jesus calls us to align our prayer life with a heart posture that mirrors God's mercy.

Corrie ten Boom, who survived the Holocaust, famously forgave a Nazi guard who had tortured her sister. She said, "Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hatred." A heart of prayer cannot coexist with a life of bitterness. The church must be a place where forgiveness flows freely, where the Lord's Prayer is not merely recited but lived.

Conclusion

A heart of prayer and a life of forgiveness go hand in hand. They reflect our communion with God and our reconciliation with one another. From Daniel's intercession to David's longing, from the epistle's pastoral plea to Christ's divine instruction, we see a consistent biblical call: pray fervently, forgive freely. In a world torn by grudges and vengeance, the Church of Christ is invited to embody something different – a place where prayer transforms hearts, and forgiveness heals wounds. Let us not merely speak these truths but live them out daily.

Prayer

Gracious and loving God, We thank You for teaching us to pray and for showing us the beauty of forgiveness. Create in us hearts that long for Your presence and lives that reflect Your grace. Teach us to confess with humility, to intercede with love, to walk in integrity, and to forgive as we have

been forgiven. Make us Your dwelling place, O Lord, and let our lives become living prayers. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.