

Forgiveness and Fasting

Last time: the Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:14-15 (p. 1504)

Why would God tie his forgiveness of us to our forgiveness of others? Why should he care?

- Exodus 34:5-7 (p. 141)
- Psalm 103:1-13 (p. 939)

Does God forgive unconditionally? What is the role of repentance?

“The Lord's Prayer and the attached commentary (v. 14-15) do not suggest that God's pardon is doled out in proportion to the number of times we have forgiven; it is, rather, that we must genuinely repent our hardness of heart before expecting to receive God's mercy.” – *Douglas R.A. Hare*

“Every day Christ's followers must acknowledge and bewail their guilt. Living as they do in fellowship with him, they ought to be sinless, but in practice their life is marred daily with all manner of unbelief, sloth in prayer, lack of bodily discipline, self-indulgence of every kind, envy, hatred and ambition. No wonder that they must pray daily for God's forgiveness. But God will only forgive them if they forgive one another with readiness and brotherly affection. Thus they bring all their guilt before God and pray as a body for forgiveness. God forgive not merely me *my debts*, but *us ours*.” – *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

How is it that we can even forgive others?

“In the fifth petition... we pray that God, for Christ's sake, would freely pardon all our sins; which we are the rather encouraged to ask because by his grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others.” – *Westminster Shorter Catechism*

Fasting

What does it mean to fast?

“In the pagan religions of the ancient world, it was clearly a fear of demons and the idea that fasting was an effective means of preparing oneself for an encounter with the deity, since it created the right kind of openness to divine influence... The custom of fasting following a death was widespread. While the soul of the dead person is still near, there is danger of demonic infection in eating and drinking.” – *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*

“Fasting is practiced in Israel as a preparation for converse with God... by the individual when oppressed by great cares... by the nation in imminent danger of war and destruction... and in connection with mourning the dead.” – *Dictionary of NTT*

Isaiah 58:1-9 (p. 1152)

Matthew 6:16-18 (p. 1504)

What strikes you concerning the Isaiah passage and the Matthew text?

Is Jesus condemning fasting or telling us not to fast? (See Matt. 4:2 – p. 1499)
Should we fast?

What is his message here? How does this compare to Jesus’ words about praying in public?

Treasures

What do you treasure? What do we store up? Why?

Matthew 6:19-21 (p. 1504)

Job was described in the beginning of that book in two ways (p. 788)
Which of the 2 ways does the world usually view people?
How do we describe wealth?

What is the problem with earthly treasures?

What happened if the Israelites stored up manna?

“Jesus’ followers are instructed to avoid... insecurity by accumulating an invulnerable treasure consisting of kindness performed for the glory of God.”
– *Hare*

“Hoarding is idolatry.” – *Bonhoeffer*

Does Jesus mean for us to give up all our earthly treasures?