

# Pardon mine iniquity

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let us turn again to the scripture we read in the book of Psalms in Psalm 25 and look again at verse 11. Psalm 25 verse 11.

For the sake of your name, O Lord, forgive my iniquity, though it is great. But the structure of this psalm tells of the care and premeditation with which the psalmist came before God on this occasion.

Later on the prophet Hosea said, take with you words reminding us of how careful we should be in speaking to God.

To be sure, there are times when words fail us. There are times when our thoughts are so jumbled and mixed up and perplexed and confused that we don't know what to say to God.

And at those times God understands our confusion and answers our unspoken and unspeakable prayers. Yes, even the Spirit of God himself, when making intercession for us, does so often with unutterable groaning.

[ 1 : 26 ] These are thoughts that are comforting and true and relevant to us. But what I want us to notice here especially is the careful premeditation and the employment of the most skillful art of which we are capable has its place in our commerce with God.

For you see, this psalm, like most psalms of 22 verses, begins, is very skillfully and artistically structured, with each verse beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

So we are notified that God doesn't set a premium on the rough and ready. The spontaneous and totally sincere need not be crude and unshaped.

In our meditation and conversation with God, in our prayers and entreaties, we should desire to offer the best that we possibly can.

And our search for perfection of utterance need not detract from the sincerity, intensity, and urgency of our prayers and the business that we wish to transact with God.

[ 3 : 01 ] That's what David tells us. As under the guidance of the Spirit of God, he provides us with a psalm that is a compendium of praise, reflection, prayer, and resolution within a strictly organized poetic structure.

Now that being said, by way of general introduction, I want us now to concentrate on one particular petition which David includes in this psalm.

And it's one that I think and I know will befit us all. For the sake of your name, O Lord, forgive my iniquity, though it is great.

Three things we'll take our consideration as we study this verse. First of all, we'll remind ourselves that this is an ongoing and constantly repeated plea of every Christian believer.

then we'll reflect on the consideration that gives urgency to the plea, the fact that iniquity is great.

[ 4 : 18 ] And then we'll observe the foundation of hope. The foundation of hope in presenting the plea is that it is offered for the sake of your name, O Lord.

I say that this is an ongoing plea in the experience of every Christian believer. As often as a believer comes before God in prayer, this figures as one of his petitions.

Have you ever prayed? Or have you ever heard anyone else pray? Without their being included in the prayer at some point such words as Pardon my sins, blot out my transgressions, hide thy face from mine iniquities.

And you don't feel that this is just ritual repetition. You don't feel that this is unnecessary repetition. You feel on the contrary that this prayer is appropriate and relevant and necessary and should never be omitted. Why, even in the prayer which the Lord taught his disciples as an ongoing model, this is a specific plea to forgive us our trespasses.

[ 5 : 52 ] This tells us something about the kind of people we are. Even when we have done our best to live godly and uprightly and spiritually, we are conscious of failure and shortcoming and overt transgression.

And we so seldom achieve our best that it's with a sense of shame and confusion that we come before God and this gives emphasis to our plea that he will forgive our trespasses.

the stark fact is that we daily break in thought, in word and in deed.

We never, but never, come before God with a clean slate as far as our behaviour is concerned. if the slate is to be cleaned it will be cleaned only by God himself.

The fact is that where there is awareness of God people have an awareness of sin and only where there is awareness of God do people have an awareness of sin.

[ 7 : 16 ] I don't say that people who have no belief in or awareness of God have no sense of imperfection or wrongdoing or guilt or suffer from guilt feeling.

That would be untrue to universal experience and to the testimony of a God-given conscience. a humanist however high his ideals a humanist recognises that he falls short of them.

He wrongs people. He sets up laws and conventions that are meant to achieve political correctness but he knows that those laws and those conventions are constantly breached.

But even though regretting and sorrowing over those breaches the secularist who has no awareness of God has no awareness of sin.

A sense of wrong a sense of guilt yes but no awareness of sin. For sin is essentially wrong done to God defiance of his will repudiation of his authority authority.

[ 8 : 35 ] That is how the psalmist elsewhere admits against you against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.

When David made this confession he was fully aware that he had heinously wronged other people. He had been guilty of adultery and murder and attempts to cover up his wickedness.

He deserved to be and knew that he deserved to be a social outcast. He had done what was subversive of all decent human relationships but the sin the sin of what he had done was in contempt the contempt shown for God and his revealed will.

His way to peace then was not just by making amends as far as he could to those whom he had wronged and cheated but to seek the pardon of God.

So he pleads with God have mercy on me O God according to your unfailing love according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

[ 9 : 55 ] I say again it's only the person who is aware of God and his will who is aware of sin.

Only awareness of who God is and of what he requires can truly prompt the plea forgive pardon my iniquity.

And the apostle Paul makes that abundantly clear when he tells us quite categorically I had not known sin but what the commandment said.

The fact that awareness of God and his law leads to awareness of sin and the wretchedness that ensues does not of course mean that God is the cause of or responsible for our wretchedness.

That would be like blaming the light for the filth in which we have wallowed in the dark. The light just exposes it shows the real condition of things and that is what awareness of God does.

[ 11 : 17 ] Of course it is the revealed perfection of God that makes us aware of how different we are. The vision of perfection if we have a vision at all of God the vision of perfection ought to elicit our profound admiration.

We should feel that is the pattern that I should follow. That is what I should be. How can I be like that?

But sadly faced with the perfection of God we realize that there is something very sinister in our makeup where there should be admiration there is fear perhaps even jealousy fear dislike even hostility we realize that our sinfulness is not just a matter of weakness or maladjustment or shortcoming it's due to something positive and a determining force within us that makes us want to be different from God to be independent of God to be our own masters of destiny and with this there is a sense of frustration of failure we can't be we can't fulfill achieve any fulfillment in alienation from God no self fulfillment is possible in that alienation a radical change has to take place in us so when we plead for the forgiveness of our iniquity we are also pleading for a new concept of what and who we are for even when we have known

God's pardon we are still aware of a residuum of rebellion something we refer to as the old man some remaining addiction to our own way which means that we remain lifelong sinners and have to come before God seeking pardon not seven times not seventy times seven but constantly every day coming before God with a plea forgive my iniquity for it is great what I'm saying here is that sin always always has its concomitants and consequences for sin always challenges the sovereignty of God so it has been rightly said that sin is an inescapable necessity of punishment the sense of being under this condemnation presses heavily upon us wears us down and makes us initially makes us want to distance ourselves from God and until we recognize that in this distance there is no peace and that we have to come before God seeking his pardon there is no rest for our souls that is our ongoing experience we're never totally rid of the sense or awareness of sin and its associated sense of discomfort and distress and that is how the plea for forgiveness must be a continually repeated refrain but a mere refrain it is not a mere formula it is not the plea and God's response accepted and acknowledged by faith is as vital to our spiritual life as breath is to our physical life this is a constantly appropriate prayer forgive pardon my iniquity now let's think a little about the consideration that tells us that makes our plea urgent it is that iniquity is great left to ourselves the awareness of having offended God sets us on a course of self defense we make excuses we rationalize we exaggerate every possible alleviating factor we try to make it appear as though we had no option but to act as we did fortunately we're not left to ourselves and our efforts at self justification are therefore abandoned and we become aware of the full dimensions of our offenses against

God sometimes as was the case with David God sends a particular messenger to make us face reality sometimes it's unexpected providences that awaken conscience and we have to give up our sense of virtue then we realize that no sin is trivial and our sin is great and the sense of the greatness of our sin gives urgency to our plea then our fight with the law of God has to be abandoned we will no more complain of its strictness and impracticability for when God awakens our conscience we see that the law is holy and just and good holy as Thomas [17:56] Halliburton comments holy and such as becomes the nature of God and just as such as we can make no objection against it and good and such as is every way calculated to my advantage these are the conditions that inform us of the nature and consequences of sin it's in this new spiritual human view of the law of the law of God that we recognize the total disaster that sin is what ruin it has wrought in human nature how it has replaced gentleness with cruelty love with lust contentment with covetousness and generosity with avarice and there is hardly a single instance of sin that is not characterized by these preachers in this light too we become aware and perceive the absurdity of sin it's total irrationality for what does the sinner gain what does his repression of conscience and snatching at supposed pleasures and profits what does this achieve for him what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul sooner or later sooner or later every convicted sinner tells himself that he's been a fool he has embraced the absurd as though it were the acme of wisdom the embracing of the absurd is of course the result or a result of the deceitfulness of sin sinful temptations are profuse with promises and sometimes it seems as though those promises are fulfilled but this is the laying of the bait this is the spreading of the net for the unwary and the diked sinner soon is inextricably entangled in that net and only when in the sincerity of faith the prayer for forgiveness is offered is the net broken and we are set free but the entangling net demonstrates the greatness of our sin another thing that consideration of the goodness of God's law highlights is the defiling nature of sin the penitent sinner is disgusted with himself disgusted with himself he is shocked that he should be such an object of loathing you recall how people under the old ceremonial law people who were ceremonially unclean were separated from the fellowship of the congregation they couldn't mingle with the people of God because they would be regarded as sources and spreaders of pollution and that's how the convicted sinner feels of himself so often when we become aware of what sin has made us we long long for reinstatement long for reinstatement in the favor and in the family of God we confess the greatness of our sin and long to be cleansed wash away

all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sins says David cleanse me with hyssop and I shall be clean wash me and I shall be whiter than snow that is the urgency that is the intensity of this petition pardon my iniquity for it is great and now finally the foundation of hope in presenting this plea is that it is offered for the sake of your name oh Lord will not the realization that our sin is great be a barrier to our calling upon God so then we ask is God likely then only to forgive small sins of such there be

the very thought that sins are small and trivial inclines us to carelessness we won't bother God with them we'll work it out ourselves will manage to achieve peace some way or other by our own goodness and virtue but a real understanding of what sin is and its offensiveness to God tells us that no one but God can deal with it no one no one but God can deal with it and if it be true that sin is against

God and against God only God can forgive it can forgive it but will he that's the critical question why should he why should he not exact the utmost punishment put over every transgression I can't answer that question from first principles I can't answer that question from first principles because I can't adduce arguments to show that God is under obligation I can't impose an ought I can't impose an ought upon God how then do I know that God will forgive sin only in the conviction of faith I can say he will because he has said so because he has said so he has said let the wicked forsake his way on the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return to the

Lord and he will have mercy upon him and to our God and he will abundantly pardon and to show me the justice of the pardon he is willing to bestow he takes me to an altar and shows me a sacrifice that is being offered a sacrifice that expiates my sin he takes me to a cross and shows me his son bearing my sin on his body on the tree he takes me to a tomb and shows me his son his son's body there in death and reminds me that the wages of sin is death then he takes me to that tomb and it's empty he opens heaven to let me see his son the lamb in the midst of the throne as it had been slain he lets me listen to the choir of the justified saints as they sing to him who loved us and washed us and washed us from our sins with his own blood to him the glory and dominion forever and so he assures me that there is forgiveness with him that he may be feared and it's when I'm assured of this it's when

I'm assured of all this that I'm emboldened in spite of and because of my great sin to say for the sake of your name O Lord forgive my iniquity and I'm presenting here an argument before God that read in the abstract would sound impudent and presumptuous I'm arguing that God's name will be honoured by my pardon I'm arguing that God's faithfulness to his word will be demonstrated by my pardon he told me that for Christ's sake he will put away my sin and now I plead do it O Lord do it to show the truth of your promise do it to show the sufficiency of the sacrifice of your son do it to seal your good pleasure in the fulfilled mission of your son do it to excite the song of glory in the heavens do it to show joy to the angels in heaven and doing all that doing all that please give peace to my conscience so that

[ 28 : 02 ] I be bound to you in obedience and gratitude and love so shall your name be glorified for the sake of your name O Lord pardon my iniquity though it is great let us pray glory be to thy name O Lord that thou art proclaimed to us as a just God and a saviour a mighty saviour saving to the uttermost all that come unto thee through Jesus Christ glory be to thy name that thou art the God who heals the hurts of thy people who binds up the broken in heart and the grieved in mind who pardons the iniquity of thy people and who brings them under the shelter of thy wing that they may rest in

God and wait patiently for him look on us all in thy mercy and undertake for us in the riches of thy compassion for our blessed Redeemer sake we pray Amen