

## **PRAYING FOR FORGIVENESS – ACTS 8:14-24**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. It is an unpleasant reality that Christians can and do sin (*Gal. 5:4; 1 John 2:1; Rev. 2:4-5*).
2. The saint is told to be vigilant that they don't fall (*1 Cor. 10:12; 2 Pet. 3:17*).
3. But when Christians stumble and sin, how can they find forgiveness?
  - a. Scripture tells us that God desires to forgive us (*Micah 7:18-19*).
  - b. Scripture tells us repentance and confession are essential (*Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9*).
4. These elements imply that we must pray to God as Peter told Simon.
5. We want to consider the importance of prayer in obtaining God's forgiveness.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **I. PRAYING FOR YOUR OWN FORGIVENESS**

- A. Understand that anyone who truly wants to resist temptation and overcome sin in their daily walk can do so with God's help (*1 Cor. 10:13*).
- B. We should be striving each and every day to be godly in our lives.
- C. Jesus models for us the need to be mindful of temptation and forgiveness in our daily prayers (*Matt. 6:9-12*).
- D. If and when we do sin, we need to seek God's mercy just as Peter told Simon.
- E. This is because each and every sin we commit is against Him (*Ps. 51:4*).
- F. But as we come to Him in prayer, how should we approach Him?
- G. A truly penitent heart is essential (*2 Cor. 7:10*).
  - i. A heart that is grieved, not just for our own shame and guilt, or for being found out, but for the pain and hurt we have caused God and others (*Ps. 51:17*).
  - ii. Remember, repentance is not just reporting or saying "sorry" but a determination to change (*cp. 1 Sam. 6:21; Matt. 21:28-32*).
  - iii. A true repentance is more than words – it bears fruit.
- H. An open and honest confession of your sin (*1 John 1:9*).
  - i. This means admitting to myself and to God I have done wrong – I have broken faith with Him (*1 John 3:4*).
  - ii. It is said that confession is good for the soul.
  - iii. Confession to God means owning my sin without equivocation, excuses, or blaming others (*cp. Gen. 3:11-13; Dan. 9:5*).
  - iv. It is beseeching, begging for God's mercy and throwing yourself at His feet for grace (*Dan. 9:18-19*).
- I. Praying for forgiveness should not be empty words or hastily uttered "magic words" that we say and then move on with our lives as if nothing has happened.
- J. Praying for personal forgiveness is an exercise in humility and we cannot be forgiven without being willing to lay ourselves bare before our Heavenly Father in penitent prayer.

#### **II. PRAYING WITH OTHERS FOR FORGIVENESS**

## **PRAYING FOR FORGIVENESS – ACTS 8:14-24**

- A. While it is true that every sin is a sin against God, every sin doesn't always just involve us and God.
- B. There are times when our sin is known or witnessed by someone else (**Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15**).
- C. When that happens, it is good and right to do what Simon asked Peter to do for him - to pray for him for God's mercy and forgiveness.
- D. But what do we do when we pray together for forgiveness?
- E. As we said before, a penitent heart that is desiring to change is essential.
- F. But also, God says we should confess our sins to one another (**Jas. 5:16**).
  - i. This is to "confess from the heart, freely, publicly, openly (Thayer)."<sup>1</sup>
  - ii. It is an open and unreserved admission of wrongdoing to a brother or sister for the purpose of mutual counsel, comfort, and prayer.
- G. This requires us to be willing to trust one another and rely on one another to not only hold one another accountable, but to help each other bear our burdens (**Gal. 6:1-2**).
- H. Praying with one another for forgiveness is a great blessing from the Lord that we should not shy away from when we need it.

### **III. PRAYING WITH THE CHURCH FOR FORGIVENESS**

- A. Not only is there a place for private prayer or prayer with one another, but there is also a place for public prayer together for forgiveness.
- B. Public prayer was common in the meetings of New Testament churches (**Acts 12:5; cp. 1 Cor. 14:14-16**).
- C. What better time is there to seek God's mercy, grace, and forgiveness than when the righteous and faithful are gathered together?
- D. Consider David's psalms of confession and forgiveness which were used in Old Testament worship (**Ps. 32; 51**).
- E. Consider Ezra's prayer for the corporate sins of the people (**Ezra 9:1-15**).
- F. When prayer is offered for forgiveness, both the one who leads and all who follow should pray for penitent hearts who are willing to confess their wrong.
- G. If there is a need for public acknowledgement and confession of sin, take advantage of the opportunity to clear your conscience and makes things right with God and seek the encouragement and support of your brethren (**Acts 19:18-20; cp. Matt. 18:17**).

### **CONCLUSION**

1. What a blessing it is that God wants to forgive us (**Micah 7:18-19**).
2. May we strive not to sin, but if we do, may we go to God in prayer in Jesus' name entreating Him with penitent hearts, confessing our sins so we might be forgiven (**Rom. 1:8; Heb. 4:16**).

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, J. H. (1992). [\*The new treasury of scripture knowledge: The most complete listing of cross references available anywhere- every verse, every theme, every important word\*](#) (p. 1471). Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson.