

Forgive Us Our Debts, As We Also Have Forgiven Our Debtors

Matthew 6:9-13

The Lord's Prayer is the Kingdom Prayer. Jesus Christ's Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew chapters 5 through 7, speaks about God's Kingdom, more specifically, about God's Kingdom ethics for the disciples of Jesus Christ. The Lord's Prayer is located at the center of the Sermon on the Mount, chapter 6. If you pray the Lord's Prayer and live out the Prayer, you will experience God's Kingdom not only in your life but also in the lives of the people to whom you are connected in the world. God wants us to be His Kingdom agents to transform the world.

Let us explore the meaning of today's prayer, "**Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.**"

1. First of all, what is the meaning of the word "debt" here?

It is our sin. So, this prayer is to ask for God's forgiveness for our sins. This prayer clearly teaches us that we stand as sinners before God and are in need of His forgiveness. We have to be sensitive to the things we may commit against God's holiness, Kingdom, and will - you remember the first part of the Lord's prayer. We have to be cautious about the words we are saying, the behaviors we are making, and the thoughts we hold in our hearts.

"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9 NIV)

"The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time." (Genesis 6:5 NRSV)

"For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you." (Mark 7:21-23, NLT)

We have to reflect God's holiness, Kingdom, and will in our thoughts, words, and actions.

When I went to seminary, I participated in a Saturday morning couple's Bible study group. The leader was a pastor and a PhD student at the seminary. One day, he invited me to have a fellowship time together over a cup of coffee. We

had a wonderful time discussing the current church issues and sharing our journeys together. After an hour-long conversation, I came back to my apartment on campus. Then, I got a phone call from the pastor. His voice was trembling and sounded regretful. He said, "I am so sorry, Jung. When I talked about the church issues, I was too negative. It has really bothered me since I came home. I don't think I was able to reveal God's glory in our conversation. I am so sorry." And then he said this to me, "I think God wants me to ask for your forgiveness. Would you please forgive me?" I was shocked by his honesty and courage in confessing his fault to me and asking me for forgiveness. I thought his sharing was okay, but he was very conscious of his words and recognized that even his casual conversations with others should reflect God's glory and holiness.

2. Our Forgiveness & God's Kingdom

Right after teaching his disciples the Lord's Prayer, Jesus mentioned the importance of our forgiveness for others once again.

"For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14-15 NRSV)

The Lord's Prayer is the Kingdom Prayer. Again, if you pray the Lord's Prayer and live out the Prayer, you will experience God's Kingdom not only in your life but also in the lives of the people to whom you are connected in the world. Where can we find God's Kingdom? When we forgive others who hurt our feelings and cause pain in our lives, we can find God's Kingdom there. God's Kingdom resides with the forgiving hearts.

According to N. T. Wright, **"The Kingdom of God is where the loving presence of God and the faithful obedience of human beings would meet and merge and be realized in space, time, and matter."** (N. T. Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began* (2016), 414).

So when we obey God's will and His will to forgive in this unforgiving world, we can reveal God's kingdom on earth.

3. Our Forgiveness as a Condition for God's Forgiveness for Us.

God's forgiveness for our sins allows us to find peace and reconciliation with God. We can also discover our true identity as God's children. We are initiated into God's family, where we can be nurtured and grow together. Through God's forgiveness, we find our goal in life, which is God's Kingdom, and prioritize it over everything else. To confirm all these things, however, we must first forgive others. That's why we pray: **"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."** (Matthew 6:12 NRSV)

Then we might think that God's forgiveness is not grace if it is based on our merit, our act of forgiveness. Let me share with you a parable Jesus taught his disciples in [Matthew 18:21-35](#).

This parable was given by Jesus in response to Peter's question, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Do you remember his answer? "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven (seventy by seven) times." Then, he shared the following parable.

There is a king who forgives his servant an enormous debt (**10 thousand talents**; a talent was worth about 20 years of a day laborer's wages) after the servant begs for mercy. The forgiven servant then encounters a fellow servant who owes him a small amount (**a hundred denarii**; a denarius was the usual daily wage of a day laborer) and demands immediate repayment. Despite the fellow servant's plea for patience, the forgiven servant refuses and has him thrown into prison. Other servants witness this and report it to the king. The king, angered by the forgiven servant's lack of mercy, revokes his forgiveness and has him punished. "**You wicked servant ... I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?**" (Matthew 18:32b-33 NIV).

We can find at least five lessons from the parable. **First**, God's will for us is clear. God wants us to forgive our debtors. "**God's plan is not merely to reconcile people to himself, but to reconcile the whole human race to one another.**" (Timothy Tennent, *Foundations of the Christian Faith* (2021), 301.) **Second**, we already have the power to forgive, the power that is from God's immeasurable love for us. **Third**, it is very easy for us to be trapped by the unforgiving spirit and not appreciate and remember God's immeasurable grace. **Fourth**, the world is watching and waiting for us to reveal God's forgiving grace. **Finally**, God knows our hearts, our forgiving or unforgiving hearts, and we will be held accountable to God for that.

4. Then How Can We Forgive Others?

1) Remember the grace you have in Jesus Christ.

Instead of being captivated by the thought that we should forgive, we need to focus on the grace we already have. We can easily forget about God's grace unless we repeatedly recognize it and intentionally anchor our lives into it. Fill your heart with God's special grace and give thanks to God for His special presence in your lives.

2) Expose yourself to God's grace continually.

Focus on how you can be used as God's means of grace for others. Being God's means of grace is a way to recognize and appreciate more of God's grace in our lives.

3) Share your burden with your church family.

Remember that you are not alone. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus together (“**Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.**” Matthew 16:24 NIV). We are to carry each other's burden, and in this way, we will fulfill the law of Christ (which is the command, “love your neighbor”). (“**Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.**” Galatians 6:1 NIV). Let us remember that we are called to “**rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep**” (Romans 12:15 NRSV).

4) Ask God to give you a forgiving heart.

Forgiving others is not easy at all. Our hearts quickly fluctuate between our unwillingness to forgive and our duty to forgive. That is why we need help from God. We need to honestly talk to God about the unwilling state of our hearts and invite God to deal with our hearts.

Let me quote C. S. Lewis on today's prayer.

“**To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you. This is hard. It is perhaps not so hard to forgive a single great injury. But to forgive the incessant provocations of daily life—to keep on forgiving the bossy mother-in-law, the bullying husband, the nagging wife, the selfish daughter, the deceitful son—how can we do it? Only, I think, by remembering where we stand, by meaning our words when we say in our prayers each night, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us.”** (C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (2000), 182.)

When we forgive our debtors, we reflect God's Kingdom on earth. Our reconciliation with others is a clear indication that we are possessed by God's loving reign and that we obey God's will.

As you listen to the Word of God today, please take a moment to think about the people who came to your mind this morning—those who need your forgiveness. God wants you to address these issues with Him and with your community. You can begin by praying for the people who have hurt you and caused you pain.

Moreover, we can also practice asking for forgiveness from those we may have wronged or when we have made mistakes. As Christians, we are called to

sincerely confess our sins and seek forgiveness, not only from God but also from the people we may have hurt. God desires us to reveal His Kingdom on earth through His Church—through you and me—by forgiving others.