

PP Forgiven and Forgiving! *Becoming a Praying People*

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Illus Robert Louis Stevenson wrote of two unmarried sisters who lived together in a large, single room, who had a falling out over some bit of controversial theology. So bitter were they over this, that they stopped speaking to one another. They drew a chalk line right down the middle of that room, bisecting the doorway and the fireplace so that each could go in and out and do her cooking without violating the space of the other. For years this hatred persisted even when friends would visit. Each night they would go to sleep hearing the breathing of their enemy. Never did four walls look down on an uglier spectacle.

An unforgiving spirit is one of most common short circuits of grace
In fact, one could say that an ongoing unforgiving spirit is no evidence of having God's
grace in your heart

It is one of the biggest threats to God's communities

Have you ever known someone who easily harbors-even for years-grudges?

They are filled with resentment, bitterness and anger

Unforgiveness has now been shown to affect us physically:

Decreased blood flow to joints

Damages teeth through clenching

High blood pressure

Vulnerability to infections

But unforgiving people can be malignant tumors in the body of Christ as well

So Jesus instructs us to pray ***"and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."*** Matthew 6:12

PP 1-Forgiven

"and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors"

'debts' is translated from one of 5 Greek words for sin

It doesn't mean missing the mark, it doesn't mean careless disobedience, or going beyond the limits that God has established by His Word, and it doesn't mean continuous flagrant open rebellion

PP It means something owed which one is strictly obligated to repay

Just as a person in debt is financially obligated to repay it, sinners are morally
obligated to pay back our debts to God

Except that our debt to God is so great that there is no hope of paying it back

Sin dominates the mind and heart of man, having contaminated every human being

It is the corruption behind every crime, theft, lie, murder, immorality, sickness, pain, and
sorrow of mankind.

The ultimate effects of sin are death and eternity in hell, but the present effects are
misery, dissatisfaction, and guilt

Now please understand what I am about to say

There is no cure for sin except the blood of Christ, there never has been

We cannot pay for the wrongs we have committed

Those who trust in Jesus Christ receive God's pardon for sin

There is no currency we possess that can pay for our sins against God

Forgiveness of sin required the shed blood of the One who had never sinned

So we have a massive debt of sin and a moral obligation to pay it but no way to do so
This drives us to put our trust in the sinless Son of God, Jesus Christ
And when we do, God takes our sins and imputes them to Christ and takes the
righteousness of Christ and imputes it to us
We are forgiven and adopted into the family of God

PP 2-Forgiving

“as we also have forgiven our debtors”

Simply stated, this is a request that God would forgive us in the same way that we forgive
other people
This is bothersome to every sincere thinker and it has often generated two objections:

PP a) *Some say that Christians should never have to confess their sins and ask for forgiveness*

Their reasoning is that in light of our standing in Jesus Christ, we should never have to
ask for forgiveness
We are ‘justified’ by faith in Christ, meaning that God has dealt with our sins-past,
present and future-in full in the person of Jesus Christ
The sins we have committed and the sins we will commit have been put on Christ and his
righteousness has been imputed to us and God regards us now as righteous

PP “*you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.*”

Colossians 2:13-14

They say that to tell a Christian that he/she must confess their sin so that God would
forgive is to go back to living under the Law and to doubt God’s work in Christ
But Jesus is teaching this prayer to believers not unbelievers
Those who have a relationship with their heavenly Father
He’s not dealing here with the case of a sinner who has just awakened to the fact that
he needs to have his sins forgiven and so comes to God and receives the gift of salvation and
Here, we have the same truth that was beautifully and powerfully demonstrated that
fateful evening before our Lord’s death when he bent down to wash His disciples’ feet

PP Peter said, ‘*You [Lord] shall never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.” Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” Jesus said to him, “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean.*’ John 13:8-10

Peter had already had his entire person washed, he was justified by faith in Christ
But though justified, he walked through this world and became soiled and dirtied by
sin

Though we have been justified and forgiven and given right standing with God, we still
need forgiveness for our particular sins and failures that we continue to commit

PP John R. Rice has said of this: *“Though my trespasses are already forgiven me and not one of them can ever be charged against me to the condemnation of my soul [Justification], yet God is displeased when I sin and sin interferes with the communion of the child with his ‘Father which is in heaven’...when fresh sin comes between the happy fellowship of the Father and child, then that sin needs to be removed ...forgiven”*

Christians have been justified the moment they trust in Christ as Savior

We are no longer condemned, no longer under judgment, having been pardoned by the eternal Judge

And no one-human or Satan-can bring a charge against us

But we still sin and frequently require God’s gracious forgiveness

What are we to do?

We are to do as Peter did and present our dirtied feet to Christ through confession

We are to do as John instructs so that our fellowship can be restored:

PP *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9*

When Christians confess sin, there are two results: forgiveness from sin and cleansing from sin

And when we confess our sins, He forgives us, now not as Judge, but as our Father

PP *‘forgive’* mean to send away, to dismiss, to wipe off.

In the Old Testament, on the Day of Atonement, two goats were brought to the High

Priest and both symbolize what happens to our sin in Jesus Christ

One goat was killed as an offering for sin

The High Priest would lay his hands on the head of the other goat, confessing the sins of Israel, and it would be set free to go out into the wilderness to be never seen again

Christ atones for our sin, paying what we could not to relieve us our debt with God, and then takes them away deeper than the ocean, as far as the east is to the west, never to be charged to us again

And the fellowship between child and father is restored

This is the power of forgiveness

Who are the ones who can pray *“and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors”*?

They are the ones who already have the right to say *‘Our Father’*

It is the relationship of the child to the Father, and the moment we realize we have

offended, grieved or sinned against God, we confess it and ask to be forgiven

Friends, the greater the saint, the greater is the awareness and revulsion to sin

PP b) *The second objection and the more serious one to me, is that it seems like Jesus is teaching that God’s forgiveness is conditional on our actions*

Remember that Jesus is teaching believers how to pray

We know that we need to confess our sins and ask God for forgiveness and that we need to be willing to forgive others

But this little conjunction *‘as’* links the two major thoughts of this verse...forgiven and forgiving

If verse 12 said *'forgive us our debts and help us forgive our debtors'* we would be fine
But it is actually a prayer asking God to forgive us in the same way that we forgive others
This is why St. Augustine called this ***'the terrible petition'***

One Jew famously wrote, *"Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray."*

Charles Spurgeon stated *'Unless you have forgiven others, you read your own death warrant when you repeat the Lord's prayer.'*

C.S. Lewis commented on this verse: *'He doesn't say that we are to forgive other people's sins provided they are not too frightful. Or provided there are extenuating circumstances, or anything of that sort. We are to forgive them all, however spiteful, however mean, however often they are repeated. If we don't, we shall be forgiven none of our own.'*

PP James said, ***"For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."*** James 2:13

Jesus commented on verse 12 just a few verses later

"For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Matthew 6:14-15

The proof that we have been forgiven by God is that we have a forgiving spirit
We have learned that all people are in debt because of their sin, they are morally obligated but completely unable to pay God for their sins

We saw that only the blood of Christ could forgive that debt

Forgiveness then is completely dependent on Christ's death and not our actions

Here, Jesus tells us that if we withhold forgiveness to others for what they have done to us, God will withhold His forgiveness of our sins

How do we resolve this tension?

Remember, the Lord's prayer is for believers, those already forgiven of damning sin

Here is where we need to understand something of the Greek

The word for ***'forgive'*** is used twice in 6:12: asking God to forgive us, forgiving others

The tense of the first is different than the tense of the second

PP ***'And forgive us our debts'*** is a request for God to forgive us at that moment

PP ***'as we also have forgiven our debtors'*** is something that is occurring while the speaker is making the statement

The first is to begin upon request, the second is to have already begun before request

We must, Jesus says, be forgiving others their sins, before we ask God to forgive us our frequent sins

To ask God to forgive us our debts/sins, while not having forgiven one who has wronged us is to invite God to withhold His mercy and forgiveness from us

It is to pray, *'Forgive us in the same manner that we have forgiven others'*

PP John Rice again wrote that *"this daily cleansing and daily restoration of intimate, sweet fellowship with the Father we cannot have unless we forgive others their sins against us!"*

Friends, if we will not forgive others who sin against us, if we hold onto our grudges and bar them from our grace and fellowship, then we will be barred from the sweet fellowship of our Father

The proof of our adoption as God's children is the glad willingness to give the same grace and mercy to others that we have received in such large quantities from our Father
Isn't this what Paul has taught us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit?

PP ***"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."*** Ephesians 4:32

The Lord's prayer is a family prayer and we see here that God intends very seriously that we love each other and allow nothing to separate our fellowship

It is inconceivable to the Gospel that those who have the most reason to forgive and all the daily bread from God to enable them to do so, would withhold forgiveness

So what happens when Christians refuse to forgive and hold grudges?

Are they forgiven by God?

Yes, in the sense that they are justified before God and will go to heaven when they die

Yet while an unforgiving Christian is in Christ, he/she is out of God's will

They will not experience the sweet and cleansing fellowship of the Lord

They are walking in the flesh and have given Satan a foothold in their lives

They are walking in disobedience and are inviting divine discipline

Until we forgive others who have sinned against us, things will never be right between us and the Lord

The channel of God's grace is blocked by an unforgiving spirit

Friends, this is a bold prayer because we are really praying, "Forgive me God as I forgive others because of what You have done for me

Not to the same degree, because all I do is imperfect, but in the same manner

PP The Puritan writer Thomas Manton said, *"There is none so tender to others as they which have received mercy themselves, for they know how gently God hath dealt with them."*

Lord, wash my feet again, I have sinned so greatly against You

Wash them in the same way that I forgive those who sin against me

PP Next Week: *A Further Study on Forgiveness from Matthew 18*