

## **Forgive Us as We Forgive: the Lord's Prayer—part 5 of 6**

### **Matthew 6:9-13 King James Version (KJV)**

<sup>9</sup> After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

<sup>10</sup> Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread. <sup>12</sup> And **forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.** <sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

### **Introduction**

**Recap: God is our Father, His name is holy, He is the Lord of heavens and earth, He daily provides us with daily necessities, both physical and spiritual.**

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us how to pray: *God in Heaven is our Father* who loves to see us in prayer. We also learned that treating His name with utmost reverence is essential to answered prayers. Thirdly, God is in control both in the heavens and on the earth. He is the Lord of all, and we are called to advance His kingdom here on earth. Last week, we learned that the LORD our God is the faithful God who provides us with daily necessities. Finally, Jesus reminds us that we cannot live by bread alone but by every word of God that proceeds from the mouth of God.

### **Bible trivia: Why do we say "trespasses" not "debts"?**

Here's why: *"The Presbyterian and other Reformed churches tend to use "debts ... debtors". Roman Catholics, Anglicans and Methodists are more likely to say "trespasses ... those who trespass against us". The "debts" form appears in the first English translation of the Bible, by John Wycliffe in 1395 (Wycliffe spelling "dettis"). The "trespasses" version appears in the 1526 translation by William Tyndale (Tyndale spelling "treaspases"). In 1549 the first Book of Common Prayer in English used a version of the prayer with "trespasses." This became the "official" version used in Anglican congregations"* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord%27s\\_Prayer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord%27s_Prayer)).

### **Content**

Let's talk about the #1 spiritual need in our relationship with God and with each other: **forgiveness**. God first recognized such need between us and Him that He sent Jesus to reconcile us with Him. Christ suffered for our sins, and His blood brought us back to God (1 Peter 3:18). Without His forgiveness of our sins, we still would live in sin and won't be in Heaven. Forgiveness is indispensable among us as well, because if we do not forgive each other's sins, our lives will be miserable. Sometimes we hurt others and we need to be forgiven by those whom we hurt; other times we are the victims (that means, we need to

forgive the perpetrators). Forgiveness is like ‘WD 40’ for our relationships. It brings us back together. We cannot live without it.

Let’s check out how deep and broad this topic is:

What about the question of “**Should we forgive those who never say sorry to us?**” (Yes, we should, as God does. God takes initiative in forgiveness—Jeremiah 33:8 [God for Israel], Luke 23: 34 [Jesus for His enemies]); **How many times should we forgive?** Three strikes and you’re out? (I will talk about it later); **One sin that is never forgiven even by God** (blasphemy against the Holy Spirit—Matthew 12:31); **Can we ask God’s forgiveness on behalf of others confessing their sins?** (Yes, we can. Genesis 50:17—Jacob asked Joseph to forgive his brothers, Exodus 32:32—Moses pleaded with God for the Israelites, 1 Samuel 25:28—Abigail on behalf of her husband, Daniel 9:19—on behalf of Israel, Amos 7:2—on behalf of Israel) (we ought to do the same for the sins of our leaders and the sins of our society); **What about restitutions** (Leviticus 6)?; **What does truly wash away our sins?** (Jesus’ blood—1 John 2:12, Matthew 26:28— the foundation of divine forgiveness); Did you know that **God also forgives us our sins when we love Him through actions** (the sinful woman washed Jesus’ feet and her sins were forgiven—Luke 7:47)?; **Confession** (Psalm 32:5), **humility, repentance, and the fruit thereof must precede forgiveness** (2 Chronicles 6:21-39). And much more.

Forgiveness is such a multi-faceted topic that I cannot cover it with one sermon. However, this morning, we will cover three things: *the biblical understanding of forgiveness, the nature of forgiveness, and the practical reasons why we ought to forgive.*

**Definition:** First, secular definition of ‘forgive’: *stop feeling angry or resentful toward (someone) for an offense, flaw, or mistake* (Oxford Dictionary). Please note here: It mainly focuses on controlling of the person’s feelings. It doesn’t necessarily erase the offense from the offender.

Biblical understanding requires one more action than its secular counterpart: in addition to ‘*stop feeling angry or resentment toward the perpetrator*, it means ‘*to wipe out/erase/purge the offense, flaw, or mistake from the perpetrator* (Kyewoon Choi). E.g. A Christian father of a Korean student who was murdered in the back alley of Philadelphia begged the judge to let go the murderers of his son. Note here that the father’s forgiveness includes the purge of the offense of the guilty party.

**Nature of forgiveness:** For us to truly forgive our trespassers, we need to understand the nature of forgiveness.

1. **Forgiveness Is a Divine Attribute:** It's a God-thing. God is the author of forgiveness. *With God, there's forgiveness* (Psalm 130:4). Our God is a forgiving God (Nehemiah 9:17). He forgives wrongdoings (Exodus 34:7, Numbers 14:18). The reason why God forgives our wrongdoing is because He is merciful (Psalm 103:9). His compassions never fail (Lamentations 3:22). Forgiveness is our thing, too, because our Father in Heaven expects us His children to be like Him, partake in His character, and forgive each other (Ephesians 4:32). Therefore, we join God in saying, *with us, there is always and will be forgiveness*. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful (Luke 6:36).
2. **Forgiveness Is Done by God or Others.** In the Scriptures, the word 'forgive' appears approximately 200 times, both in the Old Testament and the New. The Hebrew meaning of forgiveness (כַּפַּר): *to 'lift up' (take away) the burden of guilt and shame from the perpetrator/aggressor* (p. 671, *the New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon*). Like the debt cannot be cancelled by the debtor himself, lifting up/taking away the guilt and shame can be done only by the third person, either by God or by the person that was wronged. Not by the perpetrator self. Another point: Jesus gives us a rare authority to forgive others' sins (John 20:23). It is an awesome command and authority that many believers are shy to use. By forgiving someone's sins, we can lift up/take away the curses from the offender. E.g., Loving enemies includes forgiving them (Matthew 5:44).
3. **Forgiveness Means a Second Chance.** Because God offers us forgiveness, we do have hope of reconciliation. *Blessed is he whose sins are forgiven* (Psalm 32:1). It means a clean slate for us. Likewise, we need to offer mutual forgiveness to each other. Everyone needs forgiveness and mercy, because none of us is perfect, and we all make mistakes. Setting the example before us, He forgives us and restores the relationship with us. He 'remembers no past sins' (Jeremiah 31:34, Hebrews 8:12). Forgiveness means 'to keep no records of past wrongs' (1 Corinthians 13:5).
4. **The Challenge of Reciprocating:** We always welcome and desire divine forgiveness. However, when it comes down to reciprocating forgiveness for fellow humans, it's a different story. That is, we are reluctant to do so. We expect God to forgive us instantly, but it may take years for us to forgive others, if ever. Some of us try to forgive with our own might yet find it extremely difficult, because the power to forgive is not in us. It comes from God. That's perhaps why Alexander Pope said: *To err is human; to forgive is divine*. The power to forgive others is not human. It requires divine strength. We need God's help: I can do all things *through Christ* who

strengthens me (Philippians 4:13). We can forgive through Christ who empowers us.  
**Forgiving is only possible in Jesus' name through total submission to God.**

Now, let's take a look at the **practical reasons** why God commands us to forgive and why we must forgive one another.

### Why forgive?

There are four reasons why we should forgive.

1. **Vengeance is God's: Vengeance is Mine;** God declares (Romans 12:17). Vengeance belongs to God and Him alone. Not to us. Therefore, we'd best put revenge into God's hands, not in ours. If we insist our own revenge, we not only disobey God but also play God on our part. Don't worry. He will bring justice to all wrongdoers.

2. **No forgiveness of others' sins? No forgiveness of your own.** This is the most practical reason for forgiveness. *You don't forgive others? the Lord says, then I won't forgive you, either.* God's forgiveness of your sins *entirely, totally, thoroughly, and absolutely* depends on your forgiveness of others' sins. Ramifications: *If you don't forgive others, your sins remain unforgiven by God, and you won't be in Heaven.* That's how simple it is, and how serious it is. By the way, a lot of us think that forgiveness is an option. It may be so for the world, but not for God's children. To us, it is a command, not a suggestion (Colossians 3:13). That is, not forgiving is an act of disobedience to God. Let us forgive others as God does; This is how He forgives us. He forgives until He is thoroughly satisfied with Himself. 100% all the time! No residue of unforgiveness afterward. He also forgives *everyone*, He *forgets* after forgiving, He *keeps the bridge open*, He generously *forgives beyond the sinner's expectation* (Matthew 18:23-27, Luke 23:42-43, Luke 18:9-14, 15:11-32). He forgives *repeatedly and without limit*. Do you know how many times Jesus commands us to forgive? At least 490 times (Matthew 18:22).

3. **No forgiveness? No prayers answered** (Mark 11:25). Do you want God to hear your prayers? Then, forgive. Make sure that nothing stands between you and God, in this case, unforgiveness. If your prayers remain unanswered for so long, check out if there is anyone you have not forgiven yet. When you forgive others, it opens a door to divine forgiveness and blessings on you, and God answers your prayers. The opposite is true: If you refuse to forgive someone, you will shut the door to God's forgiveness and blessings on you.

4. **No forgiveness? Hate/anger/resentment will set in your heart, and that will invite the devil into your life.** When we refuse to forgive, we store up hatred in our hearts. When our

hearts are filled with hatred, we allow an unforgiving spirit to come in and stay in us (2 Corinthians 2:11). We may end up allowing the devil to enter our hearts---Judas Iscariot (John 13:2, 27). This is a very serious matter that affects many, too many, Christians who refuse to forgive, therefore, live under the influence of the hatred demon in them. Listen: **resentment and unwillingness to forgive will give a legal ground for the evil spirits to enter and stay in your heart.** E.g. An elderly couple. A stroke left the husband paralyzed on one side. He was lying in bed. His wife was sitting next to him. One day the daughter-in-law saw her mother-in-law pulling away a cup of water from her husband who desperately tried to reach the cup with his good hand for his thirst. When asked why she was doing it, the wife replied, "I want revenge for what he had done to me. For years, he was mean to me. I had thought about divorce, but because of the children, I couldn't. Now, it is a pay-back time." I wonder who's suffering or being tortured more. This couple needs forgiveness, reconciliation, and deliverance.

### **Conclusion**

Before you go to bed tonight, say the Lord's Prayer and ask for God's help to forgive every single offender in your life (name them specifically one by one). Declare to God that you will forgive them in the name of Jesus regardless your feelings. Declare it every time you say the Lord's Prayer.

Remember God's forgiveness of your sins totally depends on your forgiveness of others. Blessed are those who forgive others in Jesus' name, for their sins will be forgiven by God.

Let us pray.