

VIII. The Lord's Prayer in Biblical Perspective
"Petition #5: 'Forgiven and Forgiving'"
Matthew 6:12
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This is the word of God. Matthew 6:5–15.

5 "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. **6** But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. **7** "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. **8** Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. **9** Pray then like this:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

10 Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread,

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

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

*(For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever,
Amen. – this is omitted in some manuscripts)*

14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, **15** but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

The grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of God abides forever. May God bless this His Word to the heart of His people.

There is a very distinct possibility that a number of people reading this are in a prison. It is a hopeless prison. It is a prison that inhibits, restrains, discourages and destroys. It is a prison that this study will declare that one can be released from this prison because the Lord has a key that unlocks the cell. This text also brings us to a challenging passage. It is a passage that says we are to forgive others as we also have forgiven others. Out of all the six petitions the Lord takes this petition and elucidates upon it. He expounds upon it by saying, "When you ask Me to forgive you of your debts, I want you to know this; that if you don't forgive those who have trespassed against you then your Father will not forgive your trespasses against Him." One may be thinking, "What does that mean? Does that mean I must earn God's forgiveness by my ability to perfectly forgive others?" These questions will be answered in this study.

First we will do some review. We are using this passage in our study on being Christ-centered disciples, how to be a follower of Jesus Christ. If I want to learn how to pray as a Christ-centered disciple then why not go to the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples on how to pray? He makes a point here that we need to remember and that point is simply this; as a believer you already are praying because you were made to pray but your sin nature and the world has disciplined you in terms of how you pray so He

says “Before I teach you how to pray I need to teach you how not to pray. Don’t pray like the pagans. They think they will be heard by their superstitious, mounting up of words. Secondly, don’t pray like religious hypocrites. Religious hypocrites have a prayer life but they always do it in public so that people will see them.” The Lord is not condemning public prayer. He is condemning the hypocrisy of doing private prayer publicly because their prayer is not designed to speak to God. The prayer is designed to be noticed by men.

Now He says, “When you pray I want you to pray this way.” Then He begins to teach us this pattern of prayer. The Lord’s Prayer may be used occasionally in worship but it is to be used consistently in our closet personal prayer life. It is a guide to teach us how to pray. First it says that we can come into God’s presence and we now have the privilege to call this God, “Father.” We have the intimacy to call Him, “Our Father” yet we still have the reverence. “Our Father who art in heaven,” this is the God of Glory. Now He tells us that we can make our requests for intercessions, our petitions.

He lays out six petitions. Three are God-ward and three in the name of God that are man-ward. The first petition gives rise to all the rest of the petitions and it is “Hallowed by Thy Name” which means glory be to Your Name. This one leads right into the second request which shows how God’s Name is hallowed and glorified throughout the world and it is “Thy Kingdom come.” The rule and reign of Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory and grace, as people come to Christ, live for Christ, obey Christ, follow Christ, the hallowing, praising and glorying of Christ will extend and cover the earth even as the waters cover the sea. When we extend God’s Kingdom that means God’s will is our chief delight. The third petition being “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” The angels worship Him because of His will. They obey His voice. God, make this true among us. May we worship You because Your will is being done on the earth and may we walk in obedience to Your revealed will. God, to hallow Your Name Your Kingdom must come and it must spread through us desiring and doing the will of God on earth as it is in heaven but God I need Your sustenance so “Give us our daily bread” which is the fourth petition. God give me those competent portions in life that I need in order to bless Your Name, extend Your Kingdom and do Your will. Now we come to this study and the fifth petition.

God, I may be nourished with my competent portions of food, drink and clothing but I have got a bigger need where I need to be right with You in my heart. The fifth petition is “Forgive us our debts, **as we also** have forgiven our debtors.” In this request the central thought is that we are absolutely declaring that when God’s grace has moved us to authentic confession and repentance of our sins, it also gives us the desire, ability and responsibility to forgive others. When God’s grace has come upon me so that I have seen my sin and confess I am a sinner, I cannot save myself and I turn from sins, God’s grace has an evidence that trails behind it. That grace gives me the ability, the responsibility and ultimately the desire to forgive those who have sinned against me. This petition has three assumptions embedded in it that are absolutely crucial to understand. These are from the lips of our Lord when He teaches His children to pray.

The first thing that this petition is assuming is that because I am a sinner, I am a debtor or indebted to God. This is an eternal debt to God because I am a sinner. It is interesting to note that when the Bible teaches us about sin it basically uses six Greek

words. Some of them translated are sin, trespasses, wickedness, iniquity and crookedness. These six words are used to build our understanding of what sin is but in the Lord's Prayer Jesus does not use any of these. He takes one word to summarize all six of these words to declare that our sin has put us in debtor's prison. We are indebted to God. Why did God make us? He made us for His glory. Ephesians 1:5, 6b says, "*He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace.*" So why did God save us? He saved us for His glory. With God's creation we were born with the responsibility to glorify God. That is our God given obligation and when God saved us and gave us freely all of those Gospel blessings He gave us a Gospel responsibility that "*whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*" (1Corinthians 10:31). He saved us to the praise of His glory and grace. Romans 12:1 says, "*By the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*" Why does God give you right now your next heart beat? He does it for His glory.

God made me for His glory. God saved me for His glory. God sustains me for His glory. I have an obligation to live for the glory of God. It is not all about me. When I fell into sin God saved me for His glory. Why does God give me the air to breathe, the heart to beat, the blood to flow and why can I move and have my being? It is all done for His glory. Now look at Romans 3:23 which says, "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" So if I have not worshiped Him in life and in assembly I owe something to God. My sin put me in debt to God. Whenever I have faltered, failed, sinned, rebelled, made it all about me, I am in debt anyway.

Now, not only because I have sinned and I am indebted to God but the second assumption from this fifth petition is because **all** have sinned, then **all** men and women are debtors to God. According to Romans 3:23 **all** have sinned and come short of God's glory so everyone has an eternal debt to God. It is not just certain people it is everyone. So here is the third assumption from the text.

The third assumption is because we/I sin against others when we/I sin against God, we are therefore indebted to others, and some are indebted to us/you because they sinned against God by sinning against us. When God saved me He called me. He said, "Harry, I've saved you and I've given you this wife and I have called you to be her Christian husband." Whenever I have faltered I have a debt to her. When I decided not to use words that encourage her and exhort her and decided to use words for myself, I have a debt to her. God gave me children to raise in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and when my children became all about me I just went into debt to my children because what they need is not someone who is in need of their friendship but a parent who is free to parent them in the Lord. If I am not that Christian parent then I am in debt to them. I am a member of the Body of Christ and I have responsibilities to members of the church as a believer. God called me as a pastor. Whenever I fall short to that I am in debt to others. So whenever we have sinned against others we have also sinned against God but we have also sinned against one another. Not only do I have a debt to God but I have a debt to those who I have sinned against and there are some who have a debt to me. Now how should I deal with them in light of God's dealing with me? "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Here are three basic takeaways from this text. The three takeaways are good news, more good news and even more good news. I have been given a lot of bad news and I am ready to give some good news. Why has Jesus put this request in the prayer about us as sinners and our debt to Him and others? What can be done about that? The good news is very simple and it is found in 1 John 1:9; *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* If I confess, “Lord, I am a sinner and I am indebted to You. Forgive me my sins” then He will forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

My favorite example here is how I get into a debt a lot on Hwy 280. It takes me about three blocks to be in debt to the Lord. By then a truck is one foot behind my rear bumper. There is a lady talking on her cell phone that has just run me off the side of the road and there is a man talking on his cell phone that has forgotten his foot is on the brake when it is supposed to be on the accelerator. I am then thinking thoughts of doing things I ought not to do and about the only thing keeping me from doing it is that these people may show up at the church next week. I say, “God, I know I shouldn’t have thought that and I shouldn’t be ready to say that. Forgive me.” The picture in my mind is Jesus going to the Father and saying, “Father, here’s Harry again on Hwy 280 and he did it again but You did that seventy times seven thing so let’s forgive him and give him another chance.” But that is not how it happens. I am in a debt and I have sinned against God but if we confess our sins He does not say, “Let’s give him a mulligan. Let’s give him another chance.” He says, “Father forgive him. It is just. I paid for that sin.”

When I was a kid at East Carolina I had a little habit of spending too much money before the end of the week. It was the end of the money before the end of the week. I would call my daddy collect. These days many young people do not even know what calling collect means. I would say, “Daddy I need some help. It is the end of the week and I haven’t got any money. Could you help me?” I wanted my daddy to send me some money. I was in debt to my daddy. God I am in debt to You. God does not send money. God sent His Son. His Son came to pay a debt He did not owe for debtors who had a debt they could not pay. Now His blood cries out and says, “Father forgive them.”

There is one more passage I want to share on this found in Colossians 2. Here Paul is in prison in Rome. There he records for us an interesting picture of Jesus Christ coming into the world and going to the cross. Colossians 2:13, 14 says, **13** *“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh (in a debtor’s prison), God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”* Here is a picture on this. Paul is sitting in a Roman prison cell writing this and over the door of the prison cell is the certificate of debt, the criminal charges against him. If it had been a capital crime Paul was guilty of when they would have led him out to execute him, they would have pulled that certificate down, fastened it to his clothing, put him to death and then said, “This is why he is dying.”

It is that certificate of debt that Paul is looking at while he is writing this and he is telling us, “You were in a debtor’s prison with an eternal debt and you were facing the prison of hell, eternal isolation, torment and separation from God. You owed that debt because you have fallen short of the glory of God but God did not send money. God did not send a religion. God sent His Son and His Son comes into this world. He goes to a

cross and your certificate of debt was taken down, fastened to Jesus, and He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." DEBT PAID. Jesus cries out from that pit of hell, "*Eloi, eloi, lema sabachthani?*" which means, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" (Mark 15:34). Then He says, "It is finished." The debt is paid.

One may be saying, "Harry you don't know how bad I am." No, I do not but I do not want to know. I do know that God's grace is greater than your sin though. The wonderful grace of Jesus reaches the most defiled and by its transforming power I have been made His child. His grace has purchased peace in heaven for all eternity. God's grace saves murderers like Moses. It saves adulterers who then kill the husband to make sure he can have the person he had adultery with, like David. He saves thieves like Matthew and Zachaeuss. He even saves religious hypocrites, like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. He forgives us of our sins and of our righteousness which is like filthy rags. He pays that debt and lets us out of that prison so that we might be free and our sins are remembered against us no longer.

This last week I was doing an Embers to a Flame conference in Marietta, Georgia for the Christian Missionary Alliance Church. It was so nice to meet people who knew people I knew. I was raised in a Christian Missionary Alliance Church. I would go to AYF when I was a kid which stood for Alliance Youth Fellowship and we would sing choruses. I still sing those choruses today. When I was preparing this message as I was in the Motel room at the Embers Conference I was thinking of this one chorus that talked about being forgiven of all my sins. They have been taken away from me because Jesus cancelled out the debt for me. He paid the debt. It was just one of those songs that came back to my mind. It goes "Gone, gone, gone, gone, yes my sins are gone. Buried in the deepest sea, yes that is good enough for me. I shall live eternally, praise God my sins are G-O-N-E, gone." My sins are gone and I am forgiven. I am free. The debt has been paid.

The second takeaway is that I have some more good news. The more good news is not only can you get out of debt because Jesus has paid your debt, but you can get others who are indebted to you out of debt to you. There are people who have debts to you. They have sinned against you and the same grace that caused you to see your need of forgiveness is the same grace that gives you the power, the ability, and the responsibility to forgive them. Now you cannot pardon them for eternity because they have to go to Jesus for that. They may have legal things because of their sins that they still have to deal with but in terms of you, you personally say, "You're not accountable to me. I turn you over to God and for me, you're free. I want you to know you are free." Colossians 3:12, 13 says, **12** "*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,* **13** *bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also **must** forgive.*" This is not on the a la carte menu of Christianity. If you have been forgiven you are to forgive as Christ forgave you, freely.

So why would Christ say in this passage "If you don't forgive others then He will not forgive you"? First of all why is He saying that the forgiveness of others is the mark of true confession and repentance in asking God for forgiveness? He is saying that because when God's grace lays hold of you, not only do you realize you have been

saved by grace but it gives a desire to treat others with that same grace and that same mercy. The integrity of our confession and repentance will be displayed in our ability to forgive others. One may say, "But Harry it says if we don't forgive others then He won't forgive us?" Is that really true? Absolutely! Here is where I wished I had more time to go into this but I only have a few minutes left but here is the distinction. Who is Jesus talking to? Jesus is not talking to unsaved people and saying "if you don't forgive others then I won't forgive you." He is talking to saved people who are forgiven of **ALL** their sins. He is not talking about the forgiveness that comes in one's conversion and one's justification but He is talking about the forgiveness of the intimacy of with Him as a follower of Jesus Christ.

When you are saved you are in the family of God and you are forgiven of all of your sins. You have the Name of your Savior and He is taking you to heaven. You have a new heart, a new record and you are going to heaven but in our life together in the family of God we are called to forgive one another. When we have sinned against our Father we go to Him, not as a criminal but as a prodigal and say, "Father I have wandered. I have come back to You. Please forgive me of my sins." When I am forgiven of my sins I am not like an elder brother who looks down on people. I want to be like the one who is truly forgiven and I am ready to forgive those who are around me. Freely I have been forgiven and freely will I forgive. He says if one does not forgive then the forgiveness of intimacy with Him will be hindered. Oh you are forgiven legally but experientially and intimately with Him will be hindered. If a person insists on holding grudges against one another their intimacy with Christ, their restoration with their relationship with Christ will be held. They will not have it. This is not "I have got to forgive in order to be saved." This is saved people are to forgive and if they do not things will not be right between them and the Father.

So why is it that we do not forgive each other? One reason is that some of us do not really understand yet what it means to be saved by grace. We still think we did something or God needed us therefore we have this elevated view of ourselves and we do not understand that we are what we are because of the grace of God. Therefore we are not able to treat other people graciously yet. Another reason why we do not forgive is that some of us have entered into this psychological game of elevating ourselves by holding things against other people. We want to feel better about ourselves by what we can say about other people and we cannot forgive them because that would mess up the whole thing. Another reason is that some of us have bought the lie of Satan that there is life in the poisonous drink of bitterness. We keep drinking bitterness thinking there is life there and there is nothing but death.

So here is my even more good news which is the third takeaway. You can get out of the eternal prison of death if you come to Jesus Christ right now and be forgiven. I was recently at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale. I told them they had lost their 50 year plus founding pastor and that the people of Briarwood Presbyterian would be praying for their sister church as the Lord would raise up for them the next step in their life. They were so appreciative. At the end of the many came by to say something to me and I noticed this one teenage girl who was standing off to the side so I slipped over there and we sat down and talked. Her name was Rachel and she was weeping because she knew she had to do some things to get right with God. A hymn came to mind as I looked at her; "My chains fell off, my heart was

free.” God took that girl out of debtor’s prison that day. Then I said to her, “Rachel I want you to go read the Gospel of John and here is another book I want you to read and then go tell three people that you have given your life to Jesus and what Jesus is doing in your life.” After that I went and talked with other people for about 30 to 40 minutes looked up and Rachel was back in line. This time she had her dad, her mom and her sister. She also had a book in her hand. Rachel in a matter of minutes was a different girl. She said, “Preacher, I’m so excited. I haven’t read John yet but I have the first chapter of the other book done and I went home and got my daddy, my mom, and my sister and I want you to tell them what happened in my life.” I said, “No, you tell them what happened in your life.” I saw this girl transformed and that is what forgiveness in Jesus Christ will do for you. Why are your feet on the husk? Come to Jesus. In Jesus you are forgiven, debt free, Christ paid it all.

Some of us though are still in that prison of holding grudges and not forgiving others. Our intimacy with God and others are broken. There was a man I was talking to one time who was a very mature man and I said to him, “How come you are not an elder in the church?” He said, “Well, I think God has called me to be one but I don’t think I can be one.” I said, “Why?” He answered, “There is a guy on the session that did something about ten years ago and I just don’t believe I can serve on that session.” I said, “I have a solution. Why don’t you forgive him?” He said, “I just can’t do that.” I said, “Well why don’t you because if you don’t he is just going to control your life from now on.” The guy said, “He doesn’t control me!” I said, “Oh yes, he controls your heart right now.” He said, “He doesn’t control me. You don’t know my heart, preacher.” He said, “I know I don’t know your heart but I know your life and your life is being controlled.” He said, “How do you know I’m being controlled?” I said, “Are you called to be an elder?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “God wants you to be an elder?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “Are you an elder?” He said, “No.” I said, “Why?” He said, “Him.” I said, “He is controlling your life. I got a great idea. Why don’t you get free by setting him free and give him to God and forgive him? Why don’t you just go ahead and forgive him?” He said, “He has some financial issues with me.” I said, “God will handle that. That is not your job but in terms of you why don’t you forgive him?”

Brothers and sisters, oh the bliss of this glorious thought from the hymn, It is Well with my Soul;

My sin, not the part but the whole,

Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul.

What a joy to know forgiveness and then the joy of forgiving. Set free from prison. Set free to love and serve Christ.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments together in Your Word. Thank You for the Lord Jesus and what He has done and is doing in our lives. Oh God I thank You that You have done a great work in our hearts and our lives. An eternal debt has been paid and You allow us to forgive others so that we may walk freely and we set them free. We can be free by giving the same forgiveness to others that we have experienced from You. So if anyone reading this has not received that forgiveness from You may this be the day that they are set free and their chains fall off, the light is diffused and they come to Christ for forgiveness. Then God may we join together so that when people in this

world hear us talk about forgiveness they will see it they way we forgive one another,
forgiven and forgiving. Thank You for Your grace, Jesus my Savior, I praise You,
Amen.