

The Lord's Prayer part 7

[Matthew 6:12]

“Forgive us our debts”

~ The Most Terrifying Petition of Prayer ~

Introduction

Homeless, helpless, & hurt...

3 words used to describe the situation that my family was in many years ago...

Me...a young 17-year-old boy sitting around the table, looking over at my father's face as he begun to tell his family that **we were all** to be moving very soon...

He proceeded to explain that the decision to move house was NOT one that he himself had made...but this was a rather a decision of the bank...

See for many months, my father was **unable** to pay the financial mortgage on the home in which we lived, and so as a result we were in fact being evicted...

Now out of all the memories I can recall that day, perhaps the greatest memory, was the look of a despairing man who knew that no matter what he did, no matter what he said, no what matter how he felt, the weight of this financial debt (that was hanging over his head) was a weight that he himself could never lift...

My father had a lot of debt that he owed that day... and as a result of the debt that he owed...there were consequences for his actions:

1. Firstly his **financial** debt affected the relationship he had with the bank – he would now have a permanent record on his credit account that would follow him for the rest of his life ...
2. Secondly his **financial** debt affected his personal relationships with those around him... see it wasn't just him that was affected by this event... but his entire household was now suffering...

And although, I'm not angry, I'm not bitter I'm not upset with my father... I personally have seen the affect that crippling financial debt can have on a family unit!!!

The truth about debt

Now I don't think that debt is evil...

I don't think it's wrong to be in financial debt as long as it is manageable and you are being a good steward of your money...

If you are in serious debt here tonight; seek help!

Don't let it cripple you! Be wise with your money brothers! Don't keep racking up the credit card debt so that you cannot pay it!

Jesus commands us to be wise and faithful stewards with the time, talents, energy, and **money** that He has given us!

A greater kind of debt

But see here in Matthew chapter 6, Jesus isn't talking about financial debt!!!

Here in Mathew 6 Jesus informs His listeners that there is **another kind** of debt that people owe to God... another kind of debt that is far beyond our human ability to deal with financially...

Financial debt may destroy a man, his reputation, and his family here on earth...but the debt that Jesus speaks of here in the Lord's Prayer...destroys a human soul...in hell; forever!

There is a debt owed to God (the Creator) that has **eternal consequences** of the soul!!!

And so tonight, as we come to this 5th petition of the Lord's Prayer we are going to see this biblical truth:

Main Point:

We need great forgiveness in order to greatly forgive!

Outline:

And we're gonna see this in 2 points:

1. Our **great** need for forgiveness
2. Our need to **greatly** forgive

Recap

This is now week 7 of our Lord's Prayer series here tonight and we've been considering the true marks of Christian prayer...

Jesus teaches us here in Matthew chapter 6, that **prayer is really** the key expression of the fact that a man, woman, or child can have a living and personal relationship with the God who made their soul...

By virtue of the fact that we are saved by grace, we enter into a relationship where God (the Creator of heaven and earth) becomes our heavenly Father!

And so the Lord's Prayer teaches us what it means to pray, and to pray as a Christian!

Father

We looked at this in a number of different ways but perhaps most poignantly we looked at the fact that as Christians, we are first and foremost seen to be a company of trusting children!

This is seen in the fact that we address God; not as Lord, not as Sir, not Master... but as Father... True Christian prayer begins with a childlike dependence upon the One who is both infinitely powerful yet intimately personal!

Hallowed

We also saw that as Christians we have been adopted and brought into the family of God whereby we may reverently and respectfully worship our Father in heaven by declaring: "*Hallowed be Your name!*"

Kingdom

As Christians we are now seen as devoted citizens to the kingdom of God...a Kingdom that is slowly conquering rebel hearts and rebel minds through the power of the Gospel! And so we pray: “*Your kingdom come...*”

Will

As Christians we display our reverence and obedience to our Father in heaven by seeking His revealed will given to us in and through the Scriptures; we faithfully obey and follow His commands... *Your will be done!*

Bread

As Christians we have unashamed dependence upon our Father, praying each and every day that we may receive from our Him “*our daily needs...*”

And so now as we come to this 5th petition here tonight, as Christians we are going to see our great need for forgiveness and our need to greatly forgive!

Historical Context

Now Jesus begins this petition with a little bit of historical insight of the day... See back in these days, in the Roman Empire, prisons generally **weren't** filled with convicts and criminals so much as they were actually filled with debtors and people who owed money...

Those who owed money were thrown into prison (incarcerated and detained) until they could make good on what they owed on their payments... and if they couldn't somehow make the payments themselves, it was up to the family of the incarcerated to come up with the money....

And so this system in the ancient world was designed to **not only** put guilt and pressure on the captive who was in prison, but also **on the families** of the captive until the family could somehow find a way to free their beloved...

And so in these days...debt didn't just create pressure, a bad reputation and anxiety, but rather in the ancient world debt was a matter of life and death!

Literally a matter of freedom and enslavement!

And so this is the (historical) picture that Jesus paints here... it's meant to evoke in our minds a serious and punishable offence!

See if the petition last week demonstrated to us that **without** our daily bread we would all die! This petition demonstrates that without the forgiveness of God given in Christ; we would all perish!

And so Jesus begins this petition in the first half of verse 12:

“And forgive us our debts...”

Forgive us our what?

Now some of you are probably sitting there at this point thinking to themselves; why in the world does Jesus say “*debts?*” *I thought it was forgive us our sins...I thought it was forgive us our trespasses...?*

Why does Jesus say debts?

Like how many times have you prayed this prayer with other people, in church, at a family lunch, or at a small group, and there’s this beautiful unity, and harmony, and everyone is saying it perfectly together, until you hit **this line** and then it’s utter chaos....Right?!?! Like everyone just decided to go maverick and do a pick your own adventure Prayer...

“Give us today our daily bread, and forgives us our “tre-sinner-passa-gresser-debtors- ssss

And you think to yourself: What just happened there?!?!

Because this person learnt it as debts; this person learnt it as trespasses; and this person learnt it as sins... and now no one wants to forgive anyone of their faulty translations of the Lord’s Prayer!

Now the reason why we have so many different words here, is partly to do with the Greek, partly to do with tradition, and partly to do with Church history...

So without boring you too much... I’ll just say this...

Those who us raised in Presbyterian or Reformed traditions are more likely to say “debts.”

Those of us who come from Anglican/Episcopal, Methodist, or Roman Catholic tradition are more likely to say “trespasses.”

And still those of us raised in **other denominations** apart from those are probably going to say “sins.”

Now the reason why all of these words were used and all of these words are **in some way correct**, is because inherent in the Greek words that Jesus used here in Matthew chapter 6... and inherent in the Greek Words that Luke uses in Luke Chapter 11... is this one truth: **all sin!** is a debt owed to God that offends His Holy Name!

So whether you say “sins”; whether you say “debts”; or whether you say “trespasses”; it doesn’t really matter because it communicates this: **all sin** is a crime against God!

And that’s the point that Jesus makes!

That all sin, whether internal or external, sins of co-mmission or sins of omission...sins where **I do** what **I know** is **wrong**...or sins where **I don’t do** what **I know** is **right**... all sin is a **moral debt** that is owed to a holy God!

All sin incurs an eternal punishment from God!

A little boy and his ice-cream

R.C Sproul once told a story to explain our debt owed to God... he says:

Imagine a little boy who walks into an ice cream parlor one day because he wants some ice-cream... and so he orders an ice cream cone with 2 scoops... the waitress prepares the cone, brings it over, gives it to the child and says: “\$2 *young man*...”

The little boy hears the price, his lip starts to quiver, and he begins to cry... helplessly he looks up to the waitress and says: “*but my mum only gave me \$1...*”

Now, you and I would see that situation going on and **most of us** I hope would do what any decent person would do and settle the outstanding debt that the little boy owed... we would reach into our pocket and give the waitress some money, and **because** it is legal tender, the waitress would have to accept our payment... thus the little boy could eat his ice-cream joyfully! On his way home...

Moral Debt

But imagine now, that when the little boy hears the price of the cone, he decides that rather than crying, he’s going to:

1. One: Punch the waitress in the face...
2. Two: Turn toward the exit...
3. Three: Run out of the shop and steal the ice cream...

The waitress screams “*Thief!!!*” and the little boy runs straight into an officer... the policeman brings the little boy back into the store and begins to arrest him...

You see the whole scenario go down, and so you proceed to say:
“Wait a minute officer, please don’t put this young boy in jail, I will pay for his ice-cream...”

What’s the problem?

Well the problem is that in this second scenario, the waitress **doesn’t** have to accept your legal tender, because the debt that the little boy now owes is **no longer a financial** debt but a **moral** debt!

By virtue of the fact that the boy has punched a lady in the face (side note: don’t ever punch a lady in the face...seems pretty obvious but just in case anyone was thinking “I could go for some Ice-cream tonight...”

And because the little boy has attempted to steal the ice-cream cone, this little boy owes a **moral debt** to the lady that he has offended! And **she** has a choice to forgive him, or not!

And so if we go back to what Jesus says here in the Lord’s Prayer... (forgive us our debts), we begin to understand that Jesus’ **is NOT** talking about a financial debt that we owe to God...because no amount of money, good works, obedience, or righteousness can settle the account that we all owe to God!

Each and everyone of us here tonight **owes to God a moral debt** because of our sin!

Daily???

But perhaps your biggest concern here is **not the words** that Jesus used, but rather your biggest concern is the...**frequency!!!** by which he tells us to pray!

Why would I need to pray for “*daily*” forgiveness, when the cross of Jesus Christ has already purchased my salvation!?!?

Why would Jesus tell us to pray for daily forgiveness when our forgiveness is purchased at the cross?!?!?

It’s a good question, and here’s what I think...

In once sense, the Gospel promises and proclaims that we have been spiritually raised with Jesus Christ and seated with Him in the heavenly places so that there is now **no condemnation** for those **who believe** and are **in Christ!!!** If you are a Christian here tonight; if you have trusted in the death of Jesus Christ for the salvation from your sin, then you are completely guiltless!

All of your sin is nailed to the cross of Jesus Christ forever!

The **legal requirements** of the law have been satisfied by Christ and God’s wrath no longer abides on us who believe! (Ephesians 2:6-7)

But...at the same time, our daily relationship with God **is affected** by our sin!

Our relationship with God can (and often will) ebb and flow, it goes hot and cold, good and bad!

We may have halos on our heads, but they are broken, tattered, and torn...

Although we are Christians we live in a Genesis 3 world! We live in a broken world! And this world is broken because of our sin!!!

It is affected by sin, it is affected by guilt, it is affected by pain, it is affected by suffering, and so as long as we live in these bodies here on this earth, our prayers will always include a confession of sin, and a daily request for God's forgiving grace!

Marriage

I mean, this is certainly how it works in marriage... just because Salli and I hurt each other with our words, with our actions, with our thoughts and emotions at the end of the day; she's still my wife and (praise God) I'm still her husband!!!

And so the status of our relationship doesn't change (we are still married) but our sin affects our **relationship**; our sin affects our **conversations**; our sin affects our **intimacy** with one another; our sin affects our **communion**; **and so it is...with God and us!!!**

Although the status of our relationship with God cannot change (we are still Christians); our sin still affects our **relationship** with God; our sin

still affects our **prayers** to God; our sin still affects our **walks** with God; our sin still affects our **communion** with God!

And so we pray **daily** “*forgive us our debts...*”

This petition reminds us first and foremost that we are all **great** sinners who need a **great** forgiveness!!!

Sin affects other people

But there is a second half to this petition...

There is a second half to this petition which explains that our sin **not only** affects our relationship with God, but our sin **also** affects our relationship with other people!

Sin **doesn't** just have **vertical effects** in this world, but it also has **horizontal effects** in this world...

And this leads us into point number 2 here tonight... our need to **greatly** forgive!

The friendship conversation

There is a conversation that regularly occurs in my household between my wife (who will **remain** nameless at this point) and myself...

And the conversation goes like this:

“Rhoi... I think you need more friends...”

“...Thankyou?”

Now there is a context to when Salli says that... but essentially what Salli means is this:

Rhoi you need some close friends in your life who:

1. Are going to be honest with you
2. Friends who you can be open and honest with yourself...
3. Friends who are going to keep you accountable when you need it...
4. And friends who are close enough to you that sometimes they are going to hurt you...

You need some close friends...

Proverbs 27 verse 6: ***Faithful are the wounds of a friend... X2***

A true friendship will wound a brother! A true friendship will wound a sister...

And that's what Jesus tells us here in the second half of this petition...

A true friendship will need forgiveness!!!

Jesus says:

*“Father, forgive us our debts **AS** we also have forgiven our debtors...(those who wound us; those who hurt us)”*

And so the natural assumption in this prayer is that you and I would be in relationships that go deeper than mere surface level conversations on a Sunday morning...

The prayer assumes that we are in relationships that go deep enough with our brothers and sisters in Christ so that forgiveness is eventually going to have to come up in the relationship and occur....

In other words; if you are in a relationship right now; whether you are married; whether you are dating; whether you are engaged; whether you are **just simply friends**, or anything else...and you never have to forgive that person, you never have to say sorry; you never have to ask for forgiveness...then that is a challenge to each and everyone of us here tonight that those people (and those relationships) are in fact not deep enough....

Because the deeper the relationship that you have with a person; the more that forgiveness is going to be needed!

The deeper you get to know someone emotionally, spiritually, and **in marriage physically**; the more you will need to say the words: *I'm sorry, or I forgive you!*

True friendships have scars; true friendships have wounds, true friendships forgive because true friendships stake their hearts on the line...

Forgive – Release

Now it's all well and good to say that we need to forgive others but what does that actually mean?!?!

What does it mean to forgive someone?

What exactly does the word forgiveness mean according to Christ?

Well, what's interesting here, is that as I was preparing this sermon, I did a little bit of homework in the Greek, and I discovered that the word Jesus used here when he said to “*forgive*” has a most interesting meaning!!!

See the word to “*forgive*” here (in the Greek) literally means to “*let go*” or to “*release...*”

And remember this is in the context of our debt that we owe to God!

So that **when we pray**, “*Hey! forgive us our debts! (forgive us our sins!)*” We are asking God to *release us* (to let go) **of the penalty** that our sin incurs against Him, and to not hold that sin against our account!!!

That's what it means to forgive!

To “let go” or to “release someone from the penalty that their sin incurs, and remember it no more!!!”

And so when Jesus tells us to pray to God: Forgive us our sins as we have forgiven those who sin against us...

What we are praying is:

*God, release us from the debt and the penalty of our sin toward you!!!
Just as we have released (or let go of) the offences that others have
committed against us!"*

That is the heart of this prayer!

That is what Jesus tells us to pray!

In the same way that we have forgiven others! Father forgive us our sin
against You!

This is terrifying to pray

Now I don't know if you have realized...but this is an incredibly
terrifying prayer!!!

Saint Augustine called this request "*the terrible petition*" because he
realized that if we are to pray this prayer with an unforgiving heart, then
we are actually asking God to **not** forgive us!!!

This is ridiculous to pray

If you pray this prayer for the forgiveness of your sin while at the same
time harboring up bitterness and hatred in your heart... then you are
essentially praying a prayer that sounds as ridiculous as this:

*Lord, I ask that You deal with me as I have dealt with my neighbour!
Lord he has offended me many times and I cannot forgive him, even*

though Lord You have forgiven me thousands of times before! Father deal with me as I deal with my neighbour!

Father I remember all of the wrongs that my neighbour has ever committed against me and my family and I am so angry and upset with this person, God and I will never forgive them for what they have done, so please God I ask; deal with me as I have dealt with my neighbour!!!

See how crazy that sounds!?!?

But see this is what Jesus tells us here in verses 14 & 15, He says:

If you forgive others their offenses against you, [then] your heavenly Father will forgive your offenses against Him!!!

*But if you **do NOT** forgive others [their offences] against you, [neither] will your heavenly Father forgive your offenses against Him!!!*

Jesus is NOT saying...

Now, let me just explain to you what Jesus is **not** saying!!!

Jesus is **NOT** saying that our ability to forgive others **earns us** the right to be forgiven by God!

He's **NOT** saying that because we have forgiven others their sin against us, God will now forgive us our sin against Him!!

We **cannot** earn our forgiveness; by forgiving others!

He's **NOT** saying that!

Jesus IS saying...

Rather!

What He **is** saying is that when we forgive others their sin against us, we demonstrate our understanding of God's forgiveness toward our sin against Him!

The fact that **we are willing to forgive** others **their** offences committed **against us**, demonstrates the fact that we understand the Good News of the Gospel! And that he has forgiven us our trespasses committed against Him!

Our ability to forgive (says Jesus) demonstrates our ability to grasp the nature of the Gospel!

The Unforgiving Servant

There's a story that Jesus once told to His disciples in Matthew Chapter 18...

Jesus said to them:

I want you to imagine a King who had servants under him, and these servants under the King owed the King a lot of money!!!

And so one day the King wanted to settle some accounts that He had with His servants in the land...

In fact, one of the King's servants owed the King such a great amount of money, that it probably would have taken 200,000 years (of non-stop work) just to pay it off... or even get close to paying it off...

This debt was in the **billions** upon **billions** upon **billions** of dollars!

It was an unthinkable amount of money that this servant owed the King!!!!

And so when the servant comes before the King, he begins to beg the King to **forgive him** the insurmountable amount of money that he owes to this lord!

And the King has mercy on this servant, and he just forgives him all of his debt!!!

Wipes it clean!!!

And the servant is shown mercy and he is let go!

Endless lifetimes of debt forgiven!!!

But that's not the end of the story...

Later on... this forgiven servant of the King, goes out and grabs **one of his own servants** (a sub-servant) by the neck... – (Which by the way I hear was legal according to Roman law; like you could strangle someone who owed money to you...wake up Australia ...lets introduce that law into the country! I mean, not that I would do that, but just to see what happens...)

And he begins to choke him and he says: “*give me the pocket change **that** you owe to me **that** I lent to you last week!!!*”

The **forgiven** servant was **forgiven** endless lifetimes of debt, and he simply **could not** forgive the sub-servant a measly few dollars that was owed to him!

Which demonstrates that this first servant didn't really understand how great his debt to the king truly was, and how great this King's forgiveness is!

(hold up hand) **Billions and billions of dollars...**

(hold up other hand) **A couple of measly bucks...**

And so when the King hears about this merciless servant and what he has done; the King orders the man to come in before Him and says:

You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me... and **shouldn't** you **also** have had mercy on your fellow servant...? Just as I had mercy on you?

And so because the King was so angry at this unforgiving servant, the King ordered that he be handed over to the jailers to be tortured until he could pay everything that was owed.

And then Jesus says this in Matthew 18:35... here's the point!!!

*So also my heavenly Father will do to you unless every one of you **forgives** his brother or sister from your heart.*

Our ability to forgive someone else, demonstrates the fact that we understand how great we have been forgiven by the King!!!

See by strangling this sub-servant... The forgiven servant of the King didn't actually comprehend how **great** his debt to the King truly was, and how **great** the King's forgiveness truly is!

If we cannot forgive our brothers and sisters who have offended us, then that is evidence that we do not understand how offensive our sin is against God!

An unforgiving Christian is not a Christian

But let me go one step further now with the weight and authority of what Jesus tells us here:

*An unforgiving Christian is **NOT** a Christian!*

***If you do NOT** forgive other people their sins against you, then neither will your heavenly Father forgive your offences against Him!!!*

That's what Jesus says!

This is why this is a terrifying petition!

*If you are un-forgiving; you **will not** be forgiven!!!*

*An un-forgiving Christian is **NOT** a true and genuine Christian!*

If you **cannot** forgive others their sins against you, then you do not understand the magnitude of your sin and debt toward God!

Thomas Watson (the great Puritan) once said:

“A man can just as well go to hell for his un-forgiveness, as he can for not believing...”

Charles Spurgeon said:

“That unless you have forgiven others, every time you read, or repeat, or say the Lord's Prayer, you read your own death warrant!...”

If you **do not forgive** others their sins against you, God **will NOT** forgive your sin against Him!

Your un-forgiveness says Jesus... is an expression of your heart... and the fact that it has not been transformed by Grace!

That's the point that Jesus makes!

There is still pain

Now...that doesn't mean (**hear this**) it **doesn't** mean that forgiving is easy!!!

It doesn't mean that once you have forgiven a person, that you won't still **feel** pain afterward!!!

Listen!!! The pain of someone else's sin against you may still be there for many years after you have forgive them...

You may be hurting and in pain from what someone did to you years ago!

I know that... I understand brothers and sisters!

I don't want to minimize anyone's pain here tonight!

Sin damages relationships...

Sin damages people!

It hurts people!

I've seen marriages destroyed because of sin! I know that sin hurts brothers and sisters!

Forgiveness is NOT feeling better

And so let me just encourage you with this...

Forgiving someone who hurts you...does **NOT** mean that there won't still **be** pain afterward!!!

Forgiveness is NOT:

Suppressing the pain and emotions that you feel when someone has hurt you...

Forgiveness is NOT: **once** I feel better about the person who has hurt me, then that must mean I have forgiven them...

Because some of you in here have wounds and scars that run back many years and probably will remain for many years of your life!

And so forgiveness is **NOT** suppressing the pain and emotions that you feel when someone hurts you... there may still be pain after the forgiveness...

Forgiveness does NOT mean trust

Secondly... forgiveness **does NOT** mean that your trust for that person will still be there after they hurt you!

You can forgive a person from your heart, and still **not** trust them... now the trust may come!!!

But, Forgiveness **does not** mean that you have to trust that person once you have forgiven them!

Forgiveness is

But what forgiveness **does mean**... is this:

Although the pain is deep!!!

Although the scars are great!!!

Although the wounds are many...

I look to the cross and I can see **my sin** committed against God... and because this holy God has forgiven my sin on the basis of Jesus Christ ...therefore I forgive you your sin committed against me!

Through the pain!

Through the anguish!

Through the hurt!

I forgive you!

I choose to let go of (and release you from) your sin committed against me; and I vow **NOT** to bring up (or use that) offence against you...

Because God has forgiven me far greater crimes and offences that I have committed against Him; I will forgive your sin that you have committed against me!

That is what forgiveness looks like here in the Lord's Prayer...

And some of you have been harboring **un-forgiveness** in your hearts for far too many years here tonight!!!

And it eats you inside... and Jesus says: *Look to the cross, remember your sin, and don't hold that sin against that person!*

Our sin affects others...

Brothers and sisters, Jesus tells us that all sin has consequences in this world!

The debt of sin has ramifications in this life!

Jesus says that:

You cannot rebel against this infinitely loving God and there not be collateral damage...

You cannot rebel against this infinitely loving God and expect that your sin **won't** affect other people!

Husbands! When you rebel against your heavenly Father there are going to be consequences in your marriage...

Wives! When you rebel against your heavenly Father there going to be consequences in your marriage!

Brothers and sisters when you rebel against your heavenly Father there are going to be consequences in your home, at your work, with your kids, with your parents...

There will always be collateral damage when sin occurs in this world!

Every single time!

This how damaging sin is says Jesus!

Sin has consequences!

The Gospel

And so let me make this real easy and clear on everyone sitting here tonight as I begin to land this plane:

There is a universal standard given in Scripture and that standard is called God's Law! The law represents God's holy nature, character, and what He is like! And each and everyone of us have NOT met that standard; we have all broken that standard; come short of that standard; rejected that standard; and hated that standard!!! And because we have all broken, hated and fallen short of His Holy standard, then each and every person sitting here tonight by virtue of the fact that you cannot measure up, owe a moral debt to God because of your sin!!!

We are debtors to our Creator!

There is not one commandment in all of the bible that does not in some way condemn us!

If we have **not** broken it in **action**, then we **have** broken it in **word**... if we have **not** broken it in **word**, then we **have** broken it in **thoughts**...

Every single one of us owe a moral debt to God because we have all sinned and fallen short of His holy standards!

As one pastor has famously said:

“Sin is a burden and must be taken off; a defilement that must be cleansed, a debt that must be paid, a mountain that must be removed...”

And so surely there is but one conclusion to be arrived at he says: *we are all **great** sinners, who **need great** forgiveness”*

And so what is God to do?

The word forgive

God is Holy and must punish sin (Isaiah chapter 5)

God is furious and will not let the guilty go unpunished (Nahum chapter 1 verse 3)

God is Holy and no evil may dwell with Him (Psalm 5 verse 4)

The Lord is all knowing and cannot acquit sinners (Job 10:14)

And so how is it...that we rebels against God; sinners in His sight; haters of good; have the audacity to approach God's holy throne of justice, and ask that He forgive us (release us) from the moral debt that we all owe to Him?!?!?

And the answer that the bible repeatedly gives...is Jesus...

Jesus is the guarantee that **all** of our debts that are owed to God have been fully and finally satisfied by the cross!!!

All of that wrath and anger that came hurling toward us in our sin and rebellion is taken off of us and placed fully and completely upon Jesus Christ; God's own Son!

So that when you place your trust fully and completely in that God-man who was crucified on the cross, you are seen by God the Father as guiltless!!!

No more sin to be paid for!

This is what Paul tells us in Colossians chapter 2, he says:

*“And you, who were dead in your **trespasses** (sins...breaking of God's law) and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive*

*together with (Christ), having **forgiven** us all our **trespasses**
(debts!)...*

And how did God do this?!?!

Verse 14:

*“...By cancelling the record of **debt** that stood against us with its
legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”*

We are debtors to God because of our sin... **but** we are forgiven by God
because of Christ!

This is the message of the bible!

And this is the message that Jesus tells us here:

We need great forgiveness in order to greatly forgive!

Closing

And so let me close here tonight with an illustration to help you
understand this...

The guilty goes free

I want you to imagine that you are a criminal... a very slick criminal...
you're good at your job...you have a loooong standing history and record
of heinous crimes against your name and you've never been caught
before, you've always found a way to justify your actions, a way to talk
yourself out of any situation you're in, and many people have tried to tell

you that what you are doing is wrong and not the way life ought to be lived... you've never cared... you've listened before... because let's be honest, a life that follows the law, and obeys the well known judge of the state is rather boring...

But now you have **finally** been caught... arrested...tried... and convicted... there you sit on death row...and because of your track record and the seriousness of your crimes the only punishment that is due to your name is death... and so you sit on death row...awaiting final execution...

And as you sit there in your tiny little cell you begin to entertain yourself in various ways to try and take your mind off of the reality that this is it!!! This is the end; this is where your life finishes... you are dead in a matter of hours...

Now as hard as you try to take your mind off reality, there's nothing that you can really do to take your mind off of the fact that death is imminent... it is close and it is real!

And as you sit in your tiny little cell, your heart begins to sink, shivers run down your spine, and you begin to sweat as the door swings open and there stands the judge; the very judge of the state that sentenced you to death!!!

The judge walks in, and He explains to you that justice required Him to sentence you to death for your crimes and because He is the best judge in the state, He did what He always does and upholds the just penalty of the

law and righteousness of His nature...unsurprised at this truth, you take a big gulp and you except your fate...

But then the judge **explains to you** something that you had never known about Him before... He goes on to explain that His heart is actually one of compassion... that He was actually moved by the condition that you're in... and so the judge looked at you and took pity...

So moved (by your condition) in fact that the judge says that he has found a way to be both just in condemning your actions but at the same time merciful in finding a solution to get you off death row...

And he tells you; *“Get your stuff, because you are free to leave...”*

This doesn't make **any** sense to you, but you're not going to stick around to find out why... and so you quickly collect your 2-3 items in your cell and you proceed to walk out of your holding...

And as you are being led out of your cell there is someone else being led into your cell... You can't help yourself, you just have to ask... and so you ask the judge... *“Well...Who's that guy!?!?”*

And so the judge explains: *“After your trial, I was talking to Him about your condition and the situation that you were in, and about my desire to be both just and at the same time merciful; and He volunteered to take your place...”*

He is going to die in your place on death row but I want you to know this; *He has done **nothing wrong!*** In fact He's **never** done anything wrong!!!

He's the best person that I know and I ought to know that because He's my Son!

He's taking your place as a guilty criminal even though He has done absolutely nothing wrong... and the only thing left to do, is for you to acknowledge that He has taken your place on death row, and you are free to simply walk out of here...absolutely guiltless!

Finish

Brothers and sisters,

If the infinite, holy, incomprehensible God in all of His perfection and holy anger against sin; looks at you and says "because of the cross of Christ" I forgive all of your sin; all of your debt; all of your trespasses...

Then how much more should we forgive our brother, our sister, our friend, our neighbor, our mum, our dad, our husband, our wife... **their sin against us!**

Forgiving a brother or sister who sins against us is a grand display of Gospel Grace!!!

When we forgive those who sin against us, we are **never more like** our heavenly Father than in that very moment!!!

We are never more like our heavenly Father than when we forgive!!!

This is the grand display of the beauty of Gospel grace!

Father, forgive us our debts, just as we have forgiven our debtors!

Oh how I pray, that we all (and especially myself) may display the beauty of The Father given in this 5th petition...

Let's Pray.

EXTRA NOTES

All sin is wrong!

The Greek word used here in Matthew 6 *opheiletēs* (off-a-lay-tess) is consistently translated as “*debt*” in the New Testament... but when Jesus uses the word debt, his listeners would probably have thought that Jesus was talking about owing a financial debt to God...

And so... knowing the heart of man and his ability to misunderstand spiritual realities, Jesus clarifies what he means by debts in verses 14 & 15:

“For if you forgive others their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you as well. But if you don’t forgive others, your Father will not forgive your offences...”

Jesus purposefully uses a different Greek in these latter verses, so that the Disciples listening to the prayer would know that whether it’s “sins”; “debts”; “trespasses”; or “offences”; that all sin is a crime against God!

True friendships wound

Brothers...in your marriage, if you are constantly finding yourself having to forgive your spouse or they are constantly having to forgive you, then that is a great source of comfort to know that your marriage is going deep enough to be vulnerable toward the other person and to run the risk of being wounded by them...

And I think this is true even in our friendships with other people... if you have friends here at this church, and your relationship determines that

you **never need** to forgive that person or that they never need to forgive you, then perhaps that friendship isn't as deep as you thought that it was...

See friendships, by their very nature, if they are deep enough will need to address the topic of forgiveness... Surface level acquaintances never have to address it... but deep, biblical, heart to heart bonds will need the grace of God's forgiveness in their lives...