

Forgive Us Our Debts

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[0 : 00] But if we could this evening with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in Matthew chapter 6, Matthew chapter 6, if we read again in verse 9, we'll read the Lord's prayer again.

Where Jesus says in verse 9, After this manner, therefore pray ye, Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.

Amen. And this evening as we mentioned, we're looking at verse 12, and the petition, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. As you know, Corrie Tim Boomb was a remarkable Christian woman, because I'm sure you've read the history of her life and what she's been through.

[1 : 18] She hid hundreds of Jews in what became known as the hiding place, and by doing so she helped them escape the Nazis from the Holocaust during the Second World War.

But you know, it also cost Corrie Tim Boomb her own freedom, because you'll remember that she was imprisoned in a concentration camp, and she saw the horrors of humans suffering.

However, what made Corrie Tim Boomb a remarkable Christian woman was not only what she did during the war, it was also what she did after the war, because she travelled later as a missionary speaking about God's forgiveness, and the need for reconciliation.

And in her most famous book, which was called The Hiding Place, Corrie Tim Boomb, she not only gives a biographical account of her family's efforts to protect Jews and how her faith and hope encouraged and enabled her while she was imprisoned in a concentration camp.

But you know, she also writes about the occasion two years after the war ended, when she came face to face with one of her tormentors.

[2 : 29] And Corrie Tim Boomb, she writes in her book, she says, it was in a church in Munich that I saw him. A balding, heavy set man in a grey overcoat, a brown felt hat clutched between his hands.

People were filing out of the basement room where I had just spoken. It was 1947, and I had come from Holland to defeated Germany, with the message that God forgives.

And that's when I saw him. He was working his way forwards against the other. One moment I saw the overcoat and the brown hat, the next, a blue uniform and a visor cap with its skull and crossbones.

It came back with a rush, the huge room with its harsh overhead lights, the pathetic pile of dresses and shoes in the centre of the floor. The shame of walking naked past this man.

I could see my sister's frail form ahead of me, ribs sharp beneath the parchment of skin. Betsy, how thin you were. Betsy and I had arrived for concealing, had been arrested for concealing Jews in our home during the Nazi occupation of Holland.

[3 : 41] This man had been a guard at Ravensbruck concentration camp where we were sent. You mentioned Ravensbruck in your talk, he said. I was a guard there.

He didn't remember me. They went on and said, since that time I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well.

His hand came out and he said, will you forgive me? Corey Timboom writes, I stood there. I whose sins had to be forgiven every day, but I couldn't.

Betsy had died in that place. Could he erase her slow terrible death, simply for the asking? I couldn't have been many seconds. It couldn't have been many seconds that he stood there, hand held out.

But to me it seemed like ours as I wrestled with the most difficult thing I ever had to do and I had to do it. I knew that. The message that God forgives has a prior condition, that we forgive those who have injured us.

[4 : 49] If you do not forgive men, their trespasses says Jesus. Neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses. Jesus help me, I prayed silently. I can lift my hand, I can do that much, but you have to supply the feeling.

And so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one outstretched to me. And as I did, she says, an incredible thing took place.

The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm and sprang and it joined and we joined our hands. And then this healing warmth came. It seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes.

I forgive you my brother, I cried. I forgive you with my whole heart. And for a long moment she says, we grasped each other's hands.

The former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God's love so intensely as I did then.

[5 : 51] You know my friend, Corrie Temboom was a remarkable Christian woman because she practised what she prayed. She practised what she prayed.

And you know in the 5th petition of the Lord's Prayer, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. In this 5th petition, we are being taught to practise what we pray.

And we're being taught to practise what we pray by seeking forgiveness and showing forgiveness. We're being taught to practise what we pray by seeking forgiveness and showing forgiveness.

There are 2 headings this evening. Seeking forgiveness and showing forgiveness. So seeking forgiveness, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Now as you know we're studying the Lord's Prayer and we're studying it not only to focus on prayer but ultimately to shape and to frame our own prayers because the Lord's Prayer, it's a pattern for prayer.

[6 : 57] And as we've discovered in our study so far, the opening words, our Father which art in heaven, they are the preface to the Lord's Prayer. They teach us that we're to come to God as little children and we're to pray to God the Father through God the Son by the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

And then following the preface to the Lord's Prayer there are six petitions of the Lord's Prayer. The first three petitions they focus upon God's Glory and then the last three petitions they focus upon God's Grace.

Which means that as a whole the Lord's Prayer teaches us all about God's Glory and God's Grace. The first petition of the Lord's Prayer is hallowed be thy name.

And it teaches us that we're to regard the name of God as Holy and that when we pray we're to glorify God's nature and we're to glorify God's name.

Then the second petition of the Lord's Prayer is thy kingdom come. And it teaches us that we're to pray that the kingdom of hell will be abolished, the kingdom of heaven will advance and the kingdom of holiness will appear.

[8 : 09] Then the third petition of the Lord's Prayer is thy will be done. Which teaches us to pray that we're to submit and surrender our will to God's sovereign will.

Then the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer give us this day our daily bread. It teaches us as we saw last Lord's Day it teaches us that we're to have daily dependence upon the Lord for our sustenance and our salvation.

But then the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer which we're considering this evening is forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And as we said, this petition teaches us to practice what we pray.

And we're to practice what we pray by seeking forgiveness and showing forgiveness. Therefore, if we've ever prayed the Lord's Prayer then we must practice what we've prayed.

If we've ever prayed the Lord's Prayer which I assume you have, then we must practice what we've prayed. We must be those who are seeking forgiveness from God.

[9 : 19] And you know, we must remember that it's Jesus who is teaching us the Lord's Prayer. And he's teaching us the valuable lessons contained within the Lord's Prayer. And you know, there's no doubt that Jesus practiced what he prayed.

Of course, as the sinless Son of God he didn't need to seek forgiveness for himself. But as our savior, as our substitute, as our mediator, as our intercessor, as our advocate with the Father, Jesus sought forgiveness on our behalf.

And as the King and the Kingdom of Heaven he has the power and authority to forgive sin. He has the power and authority to forgive sin.

Which is the very reason why Jesus calls us to repent and believe in the Gospel. It's so that we will receive forgiveness of our sin.

My friend, we're to be seeking forgiveness because forgiveness is what we need. Forgiveness is what we need. As the old saying goes, the heart of the problem is the problem of the heart.

[10 : 27] And forgiveness is what we need. Because do you remember when Jesus was preaching in Capernaum? It's in Mark chapter 2. And Jesus was preaching there.

He was in a house and the house was crowded with people. But there were four men who came to this house and they were carrying their paralysed friend. And they wanted to bring him to Jesus.

And so in order to get to Jesus, they couldn't come through the door. So they had to lower him through the roof. And you remember the first thing Jesus said to the paralysed man as he was laid at the feet of Jesus.

Jesus said to him, son, your sins are forgiven. But you remember that in everyone present, they were astonished at what Jesus said. Because they all thought that this man's greatest problem was his paralysis.

But Jesus knew that his greatest problem was his heart. Jesus knew his heart. Jesus knew that the heart of his problem was the problem of his heart.

[11 : 28] Jesus knew, like us all, Jesus knew that he had broken God's commands. He had sinned and come short of the glory of God.

He had transgressed God's law. He had committed iniquity in his heart. Jesus knew that he needed forgiveness. And he desperately needed to accure to his chaos, a remedy to his ruin, a solution to his sin.

His greatest need, my friend, and our greatest need is forgiveness. Because as Jesus teaches us here in the Lord's Prayer, we are in debt to God.

We are in debt to God. Forgive us our debts. My friend, our sin. Our sin has left us impoverished, broken, and bankrupt.

We have an outstanding debt which needs paid. We have a payment which is owed. But we have nothing to pay it with. Our riches in this world, they are not the right currency.

[12 : 36] Our righteousness, it won't do because it's like filthy rags in God's sight. And even our works of righteousness, they're no use because they're tainted and tarnished with sin.

My friend, we have nothing to pay our debt. We have nothing to offer God. And our debt, it has left us destitute. We are bankrupt. We're broke.

We're ruined. We're penniless. We have absolutely nothing to offer God. But you know, the Gospel says to us, that's how you must come.

You must come with nothing. You must come with nothing. You must come in your brokenness and your bankruptcy. And you must come begging, begging for mercy, begging God to be merciful to me a sinner.

My friend, we have nothing to offer God. Therefore, we must come with nothing. We have nothing to offer. So we must come with nothing. And we must come with nothing saying with the hymn writer, nothing in my hands I bring but simply to thy cross I cling.

[13 : 48] And you know, it's when we come and cling to the cross of Jesus Christ, it's then that we experience Calvary's great transaction, where the worst about us is laid upon him.

And the best about him is laid upon us. Our sins transferred and accounted to Christ and his righteousness transferred to us into our account.

And you know, in that moment of Calvary's great transaction, when we trust in Jesus Christ by faith and faith alone, you know what happens, my friend? Our debt is clear.

Our brokenness is restored. Our bank is full. And our sin is forgiven. Our sin is forgiven.

And don't you just love that word forgiven? Forgiven. You know, it literally means to send away. Forgiven means to send away.

[14 : 53] And it carries with it the illustration of the scapegoat in the Old Testament. Of course, we're all familiar with the term scapegoat, because it's a term that we often use to describe the person who takes the blame for something they didn't do.

They're the scapegoat. But you know, the role of the scapegoat, it's actually a biblical concept, because on the most holy day in Israel's calendar, which was the day of atonement, it was on that day that all the sins of the people would be forgiven, because the high priest, he would take a goat and he would confess all the sins of the people onto the head of the goat.

And as he confessed the sins of the people onto the goat, the goat would then be bearing the sins of the people. And then the scapegoat would be sent away into the wilderness, never to be seen again.

And it was a vivid illustration of what God does in order to forgive our sins. He sends our sins away. We're forgiven.

We're forgiven. He sends our sin away. And that's what David was singing about in Psalm 103. He writes those beautiful words, as far as east is distant from the west.

[16 : 18] So far hath he from us removed in his love all our iniquity. David sang of how gracious God is towards sinners.

And he said that God is so gracious that he removes our sin. He takes our sin away. He sends our sin away. He forgives our sin as far as east is distant from the west.

But as a Christian who has already experienced forgiveness, we have to question, well, why do we have to pray for the forgiveness if we've already been forgiven?

Why do we have to pray for forgiveness if we've already been forgiven? Why do we have to be seeking forgiveness if through Calvary's great transaction, our debt is clear and our brokenness is restored and our bank account is full?

Why do we have to pray? Why do we have to be seeking forgiveness if our sin has been taken away as far as east is distant from the west? And the thing about the east and the west is that never the twain shall meet.

[17 : 30] So why do we have to be seeking forgiveness if our sin is already forgiven? Why do we have to be seeking forgiveness if we're already justified and made righteous in God's sight?

But you know, my friend, we have to remember that God is not only the judge who justifies us through Christ. He's also the heavenly Father who enters into a relationship with us through Christ.

The illustration that's often used is to describe our justification and our adoption. The illustration that's often used is that it's the judge who acquits you.

He pronounces you not guilty. And it's all because of your substitute and Savior Jesus Christ. But then that same judge, he steps down from the bench and he comes towards you and he says, now I'm going to take you home with me.

And you're going to be part of my family. And you're going to be one of my children. My friend, our justification and our adoption, it highlights two different kinds of relationship.

[18 : 42] Because the judge may acquit you once and for all, but it's the Father you have to live with for the rest of your life. The judge may acquit you once and for all, but it's the Father you have to live with for the rest of your life.

And when you grieve the Father or when you go against the Father, you need forgiveness. You need forgiveness. You know, that's why the Puritans, they used to have this lovely phrase, keep short accounts with God.

Keep short accounts with God. You know, that's why prayer, this prayer, should be a daily prayer. We're not only to pray about our daily bread, but we're also to pray about our daily burdens, we're not only to pray about our daily bread of sustenance, but we're to pray about our daily burdens of sin.

We're to pray for the forgiveness of our sins daily. But we're also to pray for the forgiveness of our sins specifically, specifically.

You know the Westminster Confession of Faith, it has an interesting statement in chapter 15. It's the chapter on repentance. And it says in chapter 15, men ought not to content themselves with a general repentance.

[20 : 09] But it's every man's duty to endeavour to repent of his particular sins, particularly. I'll read that again. Men ought not to content themselves with a general repentance.

But it is every man's duty to endeavour to repent of his particular sins, particularly. In other words, when we pray about our daily burdens of sin, we're not to generalise sin.

We're not even to trivialise sin. We're to specify our sin. We're to keep short accounts with God. We're to specify our sin.

We're to keep short accounts with God. And you know the wonder of seeking forgiveness is that God not only forgives, and that's his promise, as it is in 1 John.

If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. But you know the wonder of seeking forgiveness is that God not only forgives, he also forgets.

[21 : 14] He not only forgives, he also forgets. Micah chapter 7 verse 19 tells us that the Lord casts all our sins into the depths of the sea.

And you know when I look back over my life and the things I did in the past, you know it's Psalm 25 which gives me the greatest comfort.

Where David says, my sins and faults of youth, do thou, O Lord, forget after thy mercy, think on me and for thy goodness great.

My friend through Jesus Christ, God forgives and God forgets. God forgives and God forgets. But you know what Jesus teaches us here is that that's how we should be towards others.

We should forgive and forget. Because in the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer we're being taught to practice what we pray by seeking forgiveness and also showing forgiveness.

[22 : 18] That's what we see secondly. Showing forgiveness. We're seeking forgiveness and showing forgiveness. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And you know it was R.C. Sproul who said this petition is one of the most frightening elements of the Lord's Prayer. For we're not only asking God to forgive us, we're asking to be taught to forgive others like God has forgiven us. And as we said earlier, if we've prayed the Lord's Prayer then we must practice what we've prayed. We must seek, we must be seeking God's forgiveness. But we must also be showing forgiveness to others. We must be seeking forgiveness from God.

But we must also be showing forgiveness to others. And as we said there's no doubt that Jesus practiced what he prayed. He didn't need to seek forgiveness for himself because he was the sinless Savior and substitute of his people. He sought forgiveness on our behalf.

But more than that Jesus practiced what he prayed because he showed forgiveness to others. He showed forgiveness to others when he prayed for those who had nailed him hand and foot to a Roman cross and crucified him. Jesus prayed, Father forgive them for they know not what they do. Jesus practiced what he prayed.

And of course we're to do the same. We're to practice what we pray. We're to show forgiveness to others. But you know we're not to be showing forgiveness to others in the form of a *quid pro quo*. Where we think that if I forgive them, God should forgive me. That's not what Jesus meant. That's not what Jesus meant when he said in verse 14, if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

[24 : 23] You know what Jesus is teaching us there is that we should be showing forgiveness to others because we ourselves have come to know and experience the full and free forgiveness of God.

You know the New Testament scholar Leon Morris, he writes in his commentary, it is not that the act of forgiving merits an eternal reward, but rather it is evidence, evidence that the grace of God is at work in your life. Therefore to fail to forgive others is to demonstrate that you have not felt the saving touch of God. To fail to forgive others is to demonstrate that you have not felt the saving touch of God. My Christian friend, as someone who knows the full and free forgiveness of God, as someone who has experienced the grace of God in their heart and in their life, as someone who has entered the kingdom of heaven by faith and forgiveness through Jesus Christ, you know, we should seek and strive to imitate and emulate the King of the kingdom of heaven by showing forgiveness to others, whether they're in the kingdom of heaven or not. Because you know, if God is willing to forgive our trespasses, if God is willing to forgive our trespasses against him, then we should be willing to forgive those who trespass against us. We should be willing to forgive the debts of others. And you know, we should not only seek to imitate and emulate our Savior, we should also seek to have the spirit of Stephen. You remember Stephen, his dying words as he was being stoned to death. Stephen said,

Lord, do not hold this sin against them. Do not hold this sin against them. That's the spirit we should have, the spirit of Stephen. Do not hold this sin against them. But you'll remember Stephen, remember it was Peter, Peter who asked Jesus the question, how often will my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Will it be as many as seven times? And you remember that Jesus said to Peter, I do not say to you seven times, but 70 times seven. And with that, Jesus went on to teach those who are part of the kingdom of heaven about the importance of showing forgiveness to others.

And he did that by using a parable, the parable of the unforgiving servant. Because Jesus said in Matthew chapter 18, he said, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servant. One servant was brought to him who owed 10,000 talents, which works out at just over 3 billion pounds. But says Jesus, since he could not pay the servant, he could not pay the servant fell on his knees imploring his master saying, have patience with me and I will pay you everything. But moved with compassion, the master of that servant released him and forgave him all his debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him 100 denarii, which was only about 35 pound. And he seized him and began to choke him saying, pay what you owe. So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him the same way he did, saying, have patience with me and I will pay you. But the unforgiving servant refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. Then Jesus says, when the master, when their master heard about it, he summoned the unforgiving servant and said to him, you wicked servant,

I forgave you all your debt because you pleaded with me and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you. And in anger, we're told his master delivered him to the tormentor until he should pay all his debt, his 3 million pounds worth of debt. But then Jesus says, so also my heavenly father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart. It's a solemn warning. A solemn warning, my friend, that we're not to be vindictive or vengeful. And you know, when there's a lack of forgiveness, we're not to let that fester either. We're to be showing forgiveness continually and comprehensively. And you know, even if someone has hurt us without even knowing it, they might have said something and hurt us without even knowing it, we should be showing forgiveness by going to tell them. As Jesus said, he said it again in Matthew 18. He said, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. And if he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

[30 : 06] Do you know, my Christian friend, we're to be showing forgiveness. We're to be showing forgiveness. And I stress this point because the reality is over the years, the Christian Church has been anything but forgiving. In fact, in the past three centuries of church history, the Presbyterian Church in Scotland has been tainted and tarnished by secessions and schisms and splits and factions and divisions. And yes, some of these divisions were based upon biblical principles, but others were not. And yet today, you know, today, two or more churches with small congregations situated in a community or a town or a city, you know, I believe they stand as a poor witness of the Church of Jesus Christ. They're a poor witness. And you know, that's why Paul wrote to the Church in Ephesus. Because you know, the Ephesian Christians, they all read the same Bible, they worship the same God, they love the same Savior, and they preach the same gospel. But there was always the danger of a secession or a schism or a split, which is why Paul exhorted and encouraged the Church to endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. And you know, my friend, we see it all around us today, don't we? The same situation where we read the same Bible, we worship the same God, we love the same Savior, we preach the same gospel. But the question is, are we endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace? My friend, we're to be showing forgiveness. We're to be showing forgiveness. You know, with Sinclair Ferguson, who said, if I am not engaged in forgiving others, then I cannot have experienced the forgiveness of God myself. If I am not engaged in forgiving others, then I cannot, I cannot have experienced the forgiveness of God myself. Because the purpose of forgiveness, the purpose of forgiveness is redemption and restoration. And that's in the case of church discipline as well. The purpose of forgiveness is redemption and restoration.

But there's redemption and restoration not only in the church, it's also needed in the community. And as you know, this isn't confined to one community or one family. It's everywhere. And with this, I'll come to a conclusion this evening, because you know, there are many community clashes and family feuds over land or crafts or property. And these things they rumble on for years, even decades. And it's all because no one is willing to show forgiveness. No one is willing to say sorry.

But you know, as a minister, the fact that I often have to stand over a grave, it always reminds me that life is too short for holding grudges. Life is too short for holding grudges. And it brings me back, it always brings me back to the parable of the rich fool. You remember how he had built bigger and better barns and he was saying to himself, eat, drink and be merry.

But God sent to him, fool, tonight your soul is required of you. But you know, it's what God said next that always gets me. God sent to him, and the things that you have prepared, who's will they be? And the things that you have prepared, who's will they be? Who's will they be when you die?

Whose land will it be? Whose craft will it be? Whose property will it be? My friend, life is too short. Life is too short for Christian conflicts. Life is too short for community clashes. Life is too short for family feuds. We need to be showing forgiveness because when we die, all the things that we have prepared, whose will they be? Whose will they be? We can't take it with us.

[34 : 52] My friend, life is too short for holding grudges. That's why we need to be showing forgiveness. That's why we need to practice what we pray. Because if we've ever prayed the Lord's Prayer, if we've ever prayed the fifth petition in the Lord's Prayer, then Jesus is teaching us tonight, we need to practice what we pray. We need to practice what we pray. And we need to do that by seeking forgiveness and showing forgiveness. Seeking forgiveness and showing forgiveness. We need to practice what we pray. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtor. Well may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, Thou hast forgiven us for our sin, our sins of commission where we do things that we know about, and even our sins of omission, things that we forget to even ask for forgiveness for. And Lord, that Thou wouldst truly forgive us, cleanse us from all unrighteousness, create within us that clean heart, and renew our right spirit within us. A spirit of forgiveness. A spirit where we seek to show forgiveness to others as we have received forgiveness ourselves. Help us, Lord, we pray, to be imitating and emulating our Saviour who prayed Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. Help us,

Lord, to have the spirit of Stephen who longed that the Lord would not hold their sin to his account. And Lord, we ask that all that Thou wouldst give to us a forgiving spirit, that we would love one another as Christ hath loved us, that we would seek unity, that we would seek peace.

And as the Psalmist says that we would pursue it earnestly, oh forgive us, Lord, we pray. Help us to be more like Jesus, to be more like Jesus every day, to die unto sin, and to live unto righteousness.

Cleanse us, we pray. Take away our sin as far as east is distant from the west, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening by singing the words of Psalm 130. Psalm 130, it's in the Scottish Psalter and we're singing the whole Psalm together.

[37 : 34] Psalm 130 is, you could say, a Psalm in which there is a man here seeking forgiveness. And by the time he ends his Psalm, he's wanting to show others where forgiveness is to be found.

Lord, from the depths to thee I collide, my voice, Lord, do Thou hear, unto my supplications voice, give an attentive ear. Lord, who shall stand if Thou, O Lord, should mark iniquity, but yet with thee forgiveness is that feared Thou mayest be. We'll sing the whole Psalm to God's praise.

Through my supplications voice, give an attentive ear.

Lord, who shall stand if Thou, O Lord, should mark iniquity, but yet with thee forgiveness is that fear Thou mayest be.

I pray for all my soul that waits, my hope is in this world.

[39 : 47] More than we that, more more we watch, my soul waits for Thou, Lord.

I pray more than they that we watch, the boring night we see, let this triumph open the door, for within man sees thee.

Unventing us redemption is ever find within, and from all his equities, he is that shall redeem.