

FORGIVENESS

The Lord's Prayer, Summer 2023: Matthew 6:9-13

August 6, 2023

*This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors."*

Matthew 6:9-12

Forgiveness

"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven

"This, then is how you should pray: " '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 today our daily bread.*

¹² *Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

¹³ *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'*

Matthew 6

²¹ *Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"*

²² *Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.*

²³ *"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. ²⁵ Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt*

³⁵ *"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."*

Matthew 18

1. "Debt" is the right word (sorry to the "trespasses" and "sins" fans) which focuses on the unsurmountable debt of my sin rather than an offense or a missing of the mark (Matthew 18:21-35, but see Bloom's counter argument in my resources)
2. Forgiveness is difficult (see Ephesians 4:29-32 for the "easier" steps of discipleship)
 1. the confession requires me to agree that my sin is an offense to our holy God
 2. the responsibility requires me to put feet to my faith (see Philippians 2:12-13; James 2)

Heidelberg Catechism, Part III: Gratitude, Lord's Day 51

Q 126. What does the fifth petition mean?

A. "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" means:

Because of Christ's blood, do not hold against us, poor sinners that we are, any of the sins we do or the evil that constantly clings to us.¹ Forgive us just as we are fully determined, as evidence of your grace in us, to forgive our neighbors.²

¹ [Ps. 51:1-7](#); [143:2](#); [Rom. 8:1](#); [1 John 2:1-2](#) ² [Matt. 6:14-15](#); [18:21-35](#)

A short Old Testament history of forgiveness

¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" ¹⁶ So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: ¹⁷ 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

Genesis 50

¹³ If the whole Israelite community sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD's commands, even though the community is unaware of the matter, they are guilty. ¹⁴ When they become aware of the sin they committed, the assembly must bring a young bull as a sin offering and present it before the Tent of Meeting. ¹⁵ The elders of the community are to lay their hands on the bull's head before the LORD, and the bull shall be slaughtered before the LORD. ¹⁶ Then the anointed priest is to take some of the bull's blood into the Tent of Meeting. ¹⁷ He shall dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle it before the LORD seven times in front of the curtain ¹⁹ He shall remove all the fat from it and burn it on the altar, ²⁰ and do with this bull just as he did with the bull for the sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven'

Leviticus 4 (for the New Covenant application, see Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 9:11-28)

²⁰ The LORD replied, "I have forgiven them, as you asked. ²¹ Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth, ²² not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times— ²³ not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it.

Numbers 14 (after the people rebelled and Moses interceded for them)

¹ Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.

² Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him
and in whose spirit is no deceit.

Psalms 32, a psalm of David (Paul quotes this psalm in Romans 7)

¹⁷ "Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. ¹⁸ Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. ¹⁹ O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name."

Daniel 9, the high point of Daniel's prayer for his people

Living out the fifth petition: Being forgiven and forgiving

The sixth sentence is *a petition respecting our sins*--"Forgive us our debts." We confess that we are sinners, and need daily grants of pardon and forgiveness. This is a part of the Lord's prayer which deserves especially to be remembered. It condemns all self-righteousness and self-justifying. We are instructed here to keep up a continual habit of confession at the throne of grace, and a continual habit of seeking mercy and remission. Let this never be forgotten. We need daily to "wash our feet." ([John 13:10.](#))

The seventh sentence is *a profession respecting our own feelings towards others*--we ask our Father to "forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors." This is the only profession in the whole prayer, and the only part on which our Lord comments and dwells, when He has concluded the prayer. The plain object of it is, to remind us that we must not expect our prayers for forgiveness to be heard, if we pray with malice and spite in our hearts towards others. To pray in such a frame of mind is mere formality and hypocrisy. It is even worse than hypocrisy. It is as much as saying, "Do not forgive me at all." Our prayer is nothing without charity. We must not expect to be forgiven, if we cannot forgive.

J. C. Ryle

1. Yes, we still need to ask for forgiveness

So if I sin as a Christian, I should not fear condemnation, for there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, but I should still feel pricked in my conscience. I should not despair, but I should feel guilty when I do things that deserve to be punished. I have disrupted the Father-son relationship I enjoy with God. That's why I should ask for forgiveness—not to be justified all over again, but because I have made a mess of the most important relationship in my life. The prayer "Forgive us our debts" is the cry not of a frightened litigant but of a loving child.

Kevin DeYoung, "Why Do We Need to Keep Praying?"

2. The job of the church

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Ephesians 4 (see Colossians 3:13 and Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18, then Luke 17:1-6)

3. This is a prayer we pray for each other

¹³ Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

James 5

Resources for further study

The poster for Matthew does a good job of showing the 5 Parts of the gospel, reflecting a “new Torah”, can be found at <https://bibleproject.com/downloads/posters/>

Ryle has a commentary of Matthew 6 at <https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/m06.htm>

J. C. Ryle also has a wonderful study of how believers should respond to the disciplining work of God at <https://www.monergism.com/finger-god>

Here are some of our growing number of prayer resources:

The CRCNA’s Prayer Guide illustrates how to use the Lord’s Prayer as a guide to corporate prayer at https://www.crcna.org › files › the_lords_prayer

Kevin DeYoung’s article at <https://www.crossway.org/articles/what-does-it-mean-to-pray-your-kingdom-come/>

Lora Copely’s “Extraordinary Prayer” article at <https://www.abideproject.org/articles/extraordinary-prayer>

Becket Cook’s story of his mother’s prayer at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFWl9eWkmWg>

Kevin DeYoung has a very good study of the fifth petition at <https://www.crossway.org/articles/why-do-we-need-to-keep-praying-for-give-us-our-debts/>

Jon Bloom gives the counter position to my view of “debts” at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/forgive-us-our-what>

Trevin Wax has a short summary at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/forgive-our-debts/>

J. C. Ryle has a very good commentary on the forgiveness passage in Matthew 18 at http://www.tracts.ukgo.com/ryle_forgiving_one_another.pdf

Surgeon has several sermons on forgiveness:

on Ephesians 4:32 at <https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/1448.HTM>

on Isaiah 43:25 at <https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/0024.HTM>

R.C. Sproul has a helpful article at <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/why-forgive>

Larry Stockstill has a good summary of the pattern of the Lord’s Prayer at <https://larrystockstill.com/blog/prayer-template>

Keller has a good listen at <https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/the-upside-down-kingdom-5106/> or the .pdf version at <https://www.scribd.com/document/258555474/Upside-Down-Kingdom-Tim-Keller>

Keller also has an 8-part series on the Lord’s Prayer on .mp3 at <https://www.monergism.com/lords-prayer-8-part-mp3-sermon-series>

[Monergism.com](https://www.monergism.com) has many resources on the Sermon on the Mount at <https://www.monergism.com/topics/sermon-manuscripts-mp3s-scripture/matthew/sermon-mount-ch-5-7>

Bob Deffinbaugh has a sermon on this passage at <https://bible.org/seriespage/fatal-failures-religion-3-externalism-matthew-61-18>

Spurgeon has an interesting prayer take is at <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-secret-of-power-in-prayer/#flipbook/>