

As We Forgive Our Debtors

Jason A. Graham: The Disciples' Prayer Series

Matthew 6:9-13 (NKJV) ⁹ In this manner, therefore, 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 this day our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. ¹³ And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

This prayer, taught to the Disciples by Jesus, can lead us into revelation about God and about ourselves.

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As We Forgive Our Debtors

- We have Debtors (either real or imagined—discussed more later)
- We have need to Forgive them
- It is God's will for us to Forgive them

As...?

The “as” is to link us forgiving to us being forgiven. We are asking God to forgive our debts while, in conjunction with that, we forgive others. As the last lesson on “Forgive Us Our Debts” discussed, God has wiped away our Debt of Death to the Law of Moses (of Sin and Death) by the death of Jesus Christ,

and He did not leave us Lawless, but rather instituted The Law of the Spirit, which is Love, for us to live by. We are expected to show the same forgiveness in turn.

What Debtors?

Our debtors are those who have sinned against us (done us wrong). Sin is the cause of debt. We owed a debt of death to the law. We earned this debt through being in sin.

Romans 6:23 (NIV) For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Colossians 2:13-14 (HCSB) ¹³ And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive with Him and forgave us all our trespasses. ¹⁴ He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it out of the way by nailing it to the cross.

Under Law, when we sin against someone, we become indebted to them. There must be Justice for wrongdoing. This is why we often here phrases such as “He will pay for this” or “You OWE me an apology”. We all have a sense of the need for Justice. We all have a desire to be recompensed for being done wrong.

Why Forgive the Debt?

Jesus is the one that we must measure ourselves by.

- **Matthew 10:24-25a (NIV)** ²⁴ "A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master.
 - We forgive because Jesus is a Forgiver, and we are His disciples.
- **Ephesians 4:32-5:2 (NIV)** ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. ¹ Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.
 - We also forgive simply because we are Forgiven.

Notice earlier that I said “under law” we are indebted to those who we sin against. Under the Law of Sin and Death this debt was severe.

- **Leviticus 24:17-21 (NIV)** ¹⁷ "If anyone takes the life of a human being, he must be put to death. ¹⁸ Anyone who takes the life of someone's animal must make restitution--life for life. ¹⁹ If anyone injures his neighbor, whatever he has done must be done to him: ²⁰ fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. As he has injured the other, so he is to be injured. ²¹ Whoever kills an animal must make restitution, but whoever kills a man must be put to death.

Now under The Law of Christ the standard has actually been set higher. Under the Old Law we were in debt when we sinned. Now, under the New Law, we are in debt all of the time—even without sin. We must now walk according to Love in all things—and that is exactly what we Owe to all men.

- **Romans 13:8 (NIV)** Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

So, Love is what we owe, but what about those who owe us?

- **Matthew 5:38-48 (NIV)** ³⁸"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' ³⁹ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹ If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. ⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.
 - Jesus is explaining the difference between the Law of Sin and Death and the Law of Christ, which is Love.
 - **Romans 8:1-2 (NIV)** ¹Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ²because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.
 - This was an absolutely RADICAL teaching! Don't demand recompense for wrongs? That was unheard of, but Jesus was willing to live that way—He even died a wrongful death—the death of a sinner—our death. And He did it all willingly.
- Now we are expected to suffer wrong, injury and loss from others without any hint of the need to retaliate.

What Forgiveness Is

- We immediately must say “They don't Owe me anything” and “They do not have to Pay for this”.
 - When we forgive those who have wronged us, we cancel the penalty which we believe justice demands for their offense against us. We relinquish:
 - All desires for revenge
 - All demands for retribution
 - All wishes of evil or ill against them (i.e. our hate)
 - We must focus on the debt that we owe (love), and not the debt that they owe. We owe them love, and with that the same forgiveness that we have freely received.

What Forgiveness is NOT

Many of us shy away from forgiveness because we have many wrong perceptions about what it is. Forgiveness simply deals with the CANCELLATION OF DEBT. So, here is a list of the things that Forgiveness is NOT.

- It is not denying the REALITY of what happened.
 - It is not “Forgive and Forget”
 - It does not erase the MEMORY of the wrong
 - What takes place over time through forgiveness is that the Lord wipes away the hurt of the offence from our memory although we very well do still remember the event
- It is not a feeling. It is a choice.
- It is not denying the WRONGNESS of the actions.
- It is not denying the pain and damaging CONSEQUENCES of the wrong.
 - We don’t need to say “It’s ok.” It isn’t ok. It was wrong. It had consequences. The true statement should be “I forgive you,” not “It’s ok.”
- It is not PARDONING the offender
 - This is to say that it doesn’t abolish the person’s sin—it merely cleanses us of the sin of unforgiveness.
 - We often think if we forgive them, then they have won.
 - We often think that by not forgiving them, then we are in control. When in reality, we are truly once again in control when we do Forgive.
 - “To forgive someone is to set a prisoner free, and to realize that the prisoner was you.”
 - I have wrongly attributed this statement to Corrie Ten Boom publicly. Apparently this is a very common mistake as one can find multiple forums online where this topic is debated. However, the Jesus Storybook Bible Facebook page apparently contacted the Corrie Ten Boom Foundation, and they verified that this quote is not actually from Corrie herself. It is a quote by Lewes B Smedes, and he said “to discover” rather than “to realize”.
 - **Jesus Storybook Bible** it wasn't Corrie--It was Lewes B Smedes! confirmed by the Corrie Ten Boom foundation!
 - <https://www.facebook.com/JesusStorybookBible/posts/10150546166193569>
- It does not mean that we do not take measures to PROTECT ourselves and others from further harm.
 - For Example:
 - You do not have to trust a Child Molester. You must forgive a Child Molester.
 - You don’t have to trust a thief, and give them unguarded access to your belongings; however, you must forgive them.
- It is not necessarily RECONCILIATION or RESTORATION of relationships.
 - Forgiveness is Unilateral—it only requires one party.

- Reconciliation is Bilateral—it requires both parties.
 - Reconciliation is to bring back together that which has been separated.
 - Certainly, the ultimate goal of forgiveness would be reconciliation, but forgiveness is not reuniting.
 - Reconciliation requires the appropriate attitudes and behaviors of both parties.
 - Both parties must be in agreement about how they look at the event that separated them in the first place. Not that they agree on who was right, but that they find common-ground and mutual forgiveness.
 - Often though, reconciliation may not be possible for certain reasons.
 - The person may have died.
 - The person may have no interest in admitting wrong or in reconciling.
 - God may not want you to seek reconciliation.
 - God understands the situation perfectly.
 - He may know that reconciliation and trust in this person may simply lead to further harm to you or someone else (i.e. your children)
- “My banker could call me and inform me that he has made the decision to cancel all my debts. It really does not matter if I am happy, grateful, desirous or even willing to receive. If he chooses to release me of the debt, I have no choice but to be released. I can scream, cuss or protest loudly. I can tell him I will not accept it. I can even continue to send in my monthly payments, but the bottom line is, I owe the bank nothing if the banker decides to tear up my note. The power of forgiveness is totally in the hands of the one who holds the note. The one in debt has nothing to say about whether forgiveness occurs.” --Ed Smith—Healing Life’s Hurts
- It is not for the purpose of CHANGING the offender.
 - Forgiveness is not a prize we offer for the other person’s transformation or sorrow. Something positive will definitely happen to you when you choose to forgive, but it may not have any visible effect on the other person whatsoever.
 - Genuine forgiveness has nothing to do with the condition of the one being forgiven.
 - Forgiveness is not dependent on the person wanting it or asking for it.
- It is not STUFFING the hurt.
 - Christians many times will not admit that they are hurt because they think that others will judge them as being immature. So they just gulp the pain down inside and hide it. We must be honest and handle offence in the correct biblical manner, which is to admit we have been hurt, and then forgive.

What if I don’t Forgive the Debt?

What if we just can’t let it go? What if we just aren’t willing to suffer this injury without Justice? What if we want to hate them because it somehow feels like we are punishing them? Consider this story that Jesus told:

Matthew 18:21-35 (NIV) 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. ²⁶ "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' ²⁷ The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. ²⁸ "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. ²⁹ "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' ³⁰ "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹ When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. ³² "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³ Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' ³⁴ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. ³⁵ "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

- Here Jesus explains what can happen to us for not forgiving others From Our Heart:
 - God is angered by unforgiveness because He has forgiven so much, and He expects the same from us.
 - You remain in debt
 - You are delivered to torturers—or Tormentors, as some translations put it.
 - This Torment can come in many forms:
 - Emotional
 - Physical
 - Relational
 - So, in other words, we can suffer all kinds of Torment in our lives, in many different areas, because Unforgiveness opens us up and makes us vulnerable to Torment.
 - WE MUST FORGIVE!!!
 - Like this King, we must take account of the debts that we hold against others
 - We cannot forgive a debt we do not know exists (or will not admit exists)
 - We need to deal with the specific reason for our offence
 - This is a work of the Holy Spirit, because we often are dishonest with ourselves and suppress hurt and pain. The Holy Spirit can truly reveal the source of our offences.

Handling Offence before Unforgiveness Sets In

As noted earlier, Unforgiveness opens us up wide for Torment.

This torment can come in several areas:

- Emotional
- Physical
- Relational

So, often we suffer from pain and torment—even to the point of physical sickness—because of unforgiveness.

Consider the following scriptures written to Christians:

- **Hebrews 12:15 (NIV)** See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.
- **Ephesians 4:26-27 (NIV)** ²⁶"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷and do not give the devil a foothold.
- **2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NIV)** ³For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.
 - These scriptures explain that we can have bitterness that can defile many (many parts of us and many of those around us).
 - They show that anger, and in the sense of going to bed still angry—unforgiveness, can give a foothold to the devil.
 - They explain that we have been given spiritual weapons to tear down strongholds in our mind

We must be ready to forgive right away. I believe God is raising up an Army of Purity that walk with Forgiveness in their Hearts—just like Jesus. This doesn't mean that we are not Angry at offences. It means that our anger will not turn to bitterness, hate, and other forms of sin.

DO NOT EVEN LET YOURSELF GO TO BED WITHOUT FORGIVING SOMEONE FOR A WRONG DONE THAT DAY!!! This gives a Foothold to the Devil!

Two Opposing Processes: Bondage and Forgiveness

I want to explain to you how the devil lures us into bitterness and unforgiveness so that you will be better equipped for it. Then I will explain the process of forgiveness.

The Process of Bondage

- Bondage begins with Offence

- Offence is like a Bait that the enemy uses to lure us into Bondage
 - It comes in many different forms such as:
 - Betrayal
 - Rejection
 - Abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and verbal)
 - Spiritual Abuse by pastors, churches, and/or other spiritual authority
 - Abandonment
 - Neglect
 - Cruelty
 - Cursing
 - Deceit
 - Slander
 - Theft
 - The closer you are to someone—the more severe the offence
 - You find the greatest hatred among those who were once close
 - **Psalm 55:12-14 (NIV)** ¹²If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. ¹³But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, ¹⁴with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God.
 - **Proverbs 18:19 (NIV)** An offended brother is more unyielding than a fortified city, and disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel.
 - The higher the expectations—the greater the fall
 - “Expectations are premeditated resentments.” A friend shared this adage with me from a support group he attends.
 - We tend to blame God and others when we are disappointed
- All this leads us to be caught in the Trap of Offence
 - We build walls of separation: Act—Avoid—Accuse
 - **Act** (Denial)—To pretend and refuse to accept the truth. I know it was wrong to be offended, so I deny and repress it. I convince myself that I am not hurt, but in reality, I am.
 - **Avoid** (Withdrawal)—Because we have not dealt with the hurt properly, we construct walls to safeguard our hearts and prevent any future wounds. We become selective, denying entry to all we fear might hurt us. We filter out anyone we think owes us something. We withhold access until these people have paid their debts in full. We open our lives only to those we believe are on our side. These walls of protection we build actually become our own prisons. The focus of an offended person is inward and introspective.

- **Accuse** (Blame)—By blaming others you become self-righteous. Your focus is on the offender’s sin and not on your own. You begin to view yourself as a victim and justify your wrong behavior.
 - **Proverbs 30:11-14 (NIV)** ¹¹"There are those who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers; ¹²those who are pure in their own eyes and yet are not cleansed of their filth; ¹³those whose eyes are ever so haughty, whose glances are so disdainful; ¹⁴those whose teeth are swords and whose jaws are set with knives to devour the poor from the earth, the needy from among mankind.
 - **Matthew 7:3 (NIV)** "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?"
- So, through all of this Offence plants something in us that becomes a Root of Bitterness
 - **Hebrews 12:15 (NIV)** See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.
 - Bitterness is like a cancer to our spirit
 - It drains us of our strength
 - Although the hurt may be in one specific area Bitterness allows it to affect many, if not all, areas of our lives
 - Bitterness causes us to transform from being the Offended to the Offender
 - “Hurt people hurt people.”
 - **Ephesians 4:31 (NIV)** Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.
 - The Root of Bitterness will produce fruit in our lives
 - Wrath—explosive, you are oozing rage all over
 - Anger—is implosive
 - We fantasize about the suffering of the person who hurt us
 - Clamor
 - An outburst by shouting. Usually at everyone else but the one who hurt us
 - Sarcasm (Evil Speaking)
 - **Ephesians 5:4 (NIV)** Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.
 - Sarcasm is strong evidence of a bitter spirit
 - Malice
 - Wants another person hurt for what they have done
 - A grudge or revenge
 - “They owe me an apology” or “They will pay for that” or “I’ll get them back”

- Revenge desires personal satisfaction, but the deception is in the fact that it is Never Satisfied
 - **Romans 12:19 (NIV)** Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.
 - **1 John 3:15 (NIV)** Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

The Process of Forgiveness

- Confess your Sin of Unforgiveness, bitterness, anger, etc...
 - Often the thing that has created the most problems for us is not the offence but how we reacted to the offence.
 - We may have cursed the person that hurt us, harbored bitter thoughts of revenge, acted in anger, withdrew in resentment, gossiped about the person, literally carried out some type of revenge, etc.
 - Our ungodly response, whatever it may have been, is our personal sin for which we are accountable before God to confess and turn away from.
 - **1 John 1:9 (NIV)** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
 - You will only repent when you stop blaming others. Take responsibility for your sin.
- Admit the Hurt
- Name the Offender
 - Hold them responsible
 - Many times we bear the responsibility for the one who hurt us
- Name the Offence
- Name the Hurt (the emotions)
 - How did it hurt you? How did it feel?
 - This is defining—not judging. You have to own “I am hurt.”
 - You’ve got to lance the boil. What comes out we may be ashamed of, but it must come out.
 - You have to learn to express your feelings on how you have been hurt
 - Pour out your heart before the Father
 - **Psalms 62:7-8 (NIV)** ⁷My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. ⁸Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. Selah
 - **1 Peter 5:7 (NIV)** Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.
 - Some people who have denied and suppressed their emotions may need time to even know that they are hurt. Give yourself time to process.
 - To grieve about what people do to us is a godly thing.
- Release the Offender

- **Proverbs 18:21 (NIV)** The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.
- You forgive with intent. It is a decision of your will, and it is not based on emotion. It is Faith!
- Speak it out loud
- Bless the Offender
 - **Romans 12:17-21 (NIV)** ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
 - **Luke 6:27-28 (NIV)** ²⁷ "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.
 - **1 Peter 3:8-9 (NIV)** ⁸ Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. ⁹ Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.
 - Pray for the offender what you want for yourself.
- Ask God to fill the Void
 - **Matthew 12:43-45 (NIV)** ⁴³ "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. ⁴⁴ Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. ⁴⁵ Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation."
- If it is possible, reconcile with the person.
 - We must be led by the Holy Spirit for this.