



The Christian Connection

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From the Pastor

Lord, Forgive me and Help me to Forgive

Matthew 6:9-13

I want to start with a question for our reflection. If we were teaching on the subject of the Lord's Prayer, which line from the prayer would you feel the strongest need to explain?

"Our Father in heaven hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven 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 and ever.
Amen."

I would like to focus on the line, "Forgive us our debts as we have also forgiven our debtors."

Jesus says, when we pray, remember how we have offended God. Remember how we have failed God, even today, how far short we have fallen in God's kingdom, fallen doing God's will, God's glory -- and then ask God for forgiveness. To reflect on that a little more, whatever else we pray, Jesus teaches, we should make sure we pray for this everyday. Each day when we wake up, we will need to eat and we will need to be forgiven. Beloved, our stomachs may growl and our soul will rebel, so we need to pray and live accordingly. Interestingly, we find it hard to hear the rumbling and growling of our sinful hearts. The heart has its own voice, but the voice of the heart doesn't overwhelm us like the voice of hunger can. The pains of the heart can reveal to us more pain than hunger, however, we all learn to live with them. Restlessness, anxiety, irritability, sluggishness, impatience and grumbling are all rumblings of the heart. Sadly, if we even notice them, we have learned to excuse them instead of addressing them to God. Jesus is teaching us, we need to be forgiven and far more often than we care to admit. The prayer, "Forgive us our debts," is an open, honest, and gracious request and a daily reminder of our constant need to be forgiven of our sins.



It is interesting in Matthew 6:14-15, Jesus returns to the subject of forgiveness after Jesus finishes the prayer. Jesus says, "For if you forgive others their debts, your heavenly Father will also forgive you of your debts; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive you of your debts/sins." Observe, Jesus doesn't dig further into God's will nor does Jesus shed light on the dangers of evil. No, Jesus impresses on his followers how spiritually urgent it is for us to forgive. Jesus warns us that our prayers, all our prayers on anything else, will fall on Divine deaf ears if we harbor bitterness and withhold forgiveness in our hearts. The warning is clearly stated in the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our debts, as we also **have** forgiven our debtors." The prayer implies, if we ask God to forgive others, then we have already prayed for forgiving ourselves.

As often as we'll need to eat, we'll need to be forgiven. Interestingly, as often as we'll need to be forgiven, we'll likewise need to forgive others. So, who do we need to forgive? Beloved, we cannot pray the rest of the Lord's Prayer in a honest way if we refuse to forgive others like Jesus forgives us. Jesus reminds us through this simple prayer, that our sin problem is a daily problem. Every day, we do what we shouldn't and don't do what we should. We say what we shouldn't say and don't say what we should and we think what we shouldn't and don't think what we should. The Lord's Prayer exposes to us the rotten leftovers of our sinful mutiny against God, i.e. rejection of God in the Garden. The prayer also reminds us, that as often as we pray, our God still forgives, yes, even today if we'll humble ourselves and ask God.

So beloved, when we pray, let us plead boldly to God for forgiveness in the name of Jesus Christ. Let us remember, before we pray, let us forgive like God gladly forgives us.

Blessings for the Journey,
Pastor Chuck

