

2026 08 23 / Colossians 3:12-14, Mark 11:25

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Forgive us our sins as...

This morning. We continue our journey through the Lord's Prayer, and today we come to perhaps the line that costs us the most: "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us."



Before we can talk about forgiving others, let's start with the basic question: what actually is sin? In the Greek New Testament, the word most often translated "sin" is *hamartia*. It's an old archery term. It means "missing the mark." Picture an archer drawing back the bow, aiming at the target — and the arrow sails past it, or falls short, or veers off to the side. That's *hamartia*. It's about missing the target God set for our lives — the target of love, of shalom, of reflecting God's image.

We don't like to talk about sin; it is really a heavy and serious thing. We cannot handle it at all because we are soaked in sin. So, God sent His Son to die on the cross. Jesus took all the cost of the missed targets. This changed everything about who we are. To those who trust Jesus, God hid all the negativities in Jesus. Colossians 3 states the old self, the one condemned, the one buried under shame and missed targets, was crucified with Christ. We are now a new being: God's chosen ones, holy and beloved (Col 3:12).



But being a new creation doesn't mean we suddenly stop missing the mark. We are new, but we are not yet finished. We are new men and women in Christ who are still being sanctified, still being shaped, like clay still on the wheel. So, when we notice sin, in ourselves, in someone else, we're not meant to relate to it the way the old self did.

We relate to it as someone already held, accepted, loved in Christ. That's the foundation for everything else we'll say today about forgiveness. We don't forgive each other from a place of fear or obligation. We forgive from a place of identity, as beloved children of God.

Responding to Identity

Paul writes in **Colossians 3:12-14**: **"As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."**

Paul says, "You already are chosen and beloved, now clothe yourselves accordingly." He points to the identity of who we are. Identity comes first. Behavior flows from identity. This matters enormously for how we handle the daily irritations and wounds of life. I want to be clear: this is not about suppressing our emotions or pretending we're not hurt. **Meekness and patience are not the same as passivity. They are strength under control.** They are the fruit of the Holy Spirit in those who are in deeper intimacy with Jesus.

Not a Transaction, But a Responsibility

Now we come to the hardest phrase in the whole prayer: "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us." What do you feel when you pray this? In its structure, the sentence means, "Treat me as I treat those

with whom I have been offended.” It sounds like if you don’t forgive those who hurt you, this prayer will cause condemnation, and God cannot bless us. That reading terrifies people. And in the biblical context, it’s not what Jesus meant.

As with other parts of the Lord’s Prayer, this request touches all our beings as humans. It is not simply a tiny part of our life regarding sin. It is about our healing from sin. It is not binding but freeing our consciousness of our soul and spirit.

What is the real heart of God in this passage? This passage can cause many questions and misunderstandings. What does this prayer mean and not mean? If we can answer this, we can understand what misunderstanding is and what the right one is. It doesn’t mean that it is conditional. It doesn’t mean God will forgive our sins if we forgive somebody who sinned against us. I know that many people misunderstand this because some pastors are teaching this way.

Two things we can understand from this: **1.** God loved us without any condition. It was not a reward for what we did for the Lord. **2.** There is an order when God gives us salvation. When we were still sinners, it meant God’s love walked before us. There is a parable about that love: The parable of the prodigal son, or the loving Father.



When the younger son left with all his inheritance, and came back home from the miserable pigpen, the father didn’t impose any conditions. He didn’t say, “I will listen to what the younger son says, and I will decide whether I will welcome him or not.” He didn’t say, “I will watch for several months for this.” The father’s love and forgiveness were unconditional. Luke 15:20 says, “So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.”

The Father didn’t give him the time to repent; he ran toward and kissed him. The son’s thought was that he would go back home because of hunger, and he just moved his feet. The father took care of the rest. In responding to the father’s love, the son truly confesses that as in Luke 15:21, “His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’” **True repentance is a miracle, and unconditional love triggers it. True transformation is a new life; a deeply moved spirit starts it. The cause of repentance is the grace and warmth of the father.**

The younger son might have thought, “Will my father accept me? If he doesn’t receive me, what should I do? Can I live a different life when I go back home? Shall I walk further or stop here? What should I say when I meet my father?” How many thoughts might the younger son have had? When the house was close, the father ran and came to the younger son, and kissed, and embraced, and shouted to the servants: “Bring a robe, bring a ring, and sandals, and throw a party!”

“Forgive us as we forgive those who sin against us.” This prayer doesn’t talk about the condition of salvation. What does this mean? This prayer is for those who were forgiven. They are those who have the privilege to call God Heavenly Father. Which doesn’t mean that our sins are forgiven after we forgive the sins of others.

There is one thing that we need to be aware of. If we see how much we forgive others, we get to know how much we experienced the grace of the Lord. Those who are forgiven much can forgive much because they know how God has forgiven them! Our hearts need to be melted by the grace of the Lord. Forgiveness flows down from the cross. The destination of the flow should be the end of the world.

This prayer gives us responsibilities. **It is our request toward God, but at the same time, it is a responsibility coming down from Heaven.**

This prayer gives us a new assignment for our lives. We have to give out all our energy to forgive those we cannot forgive. To forgive the person who broke me, hurt me, and ruined me will be more difficult than the death itself. It will be a long journey toward forgiveness. It could take one year, ten years, or 30 years; it will be wrestling before God. Forgiving others is impossible if you don't request it like breathing. Even though it is not easy, if you confess this prayer constantly, you can go in the right direction, and someday you can forgive the person.

We bring it to the Lord and ask for help. "Lord, I cannot do it alone. I cannot. I will give this to you. Please change me, fill me with your love." Our eyes start to be opened toward the holiness of God. We enter into a different realm where we can understand the grace of God and where we can forgive by the same grace given to us.

Our grace toward fellow humans brings another grace that lets me join the holiness of God. You are freed in this different realm. Even though it takes time, you are on the right path to healing yourself. There is a power that makes our hearts spacious. The space of forgiveness is not the one of the weak but of the strong. It doesn't mean that you become a friend of the enemy. It means that you are freed from the person, and you are healed.