

FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS

Thursday, February 26

Reading: Isaiah 59

Isaiah 59:2 *But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.*

Many Christians skim over these four words in the Lord's Prayer. They are eager to pray for daily bread but are less excited about praying for forgiveness. But Jesus felt it was so essential that He states we should pray for it every day.

Matthew uses two different words to describe what we need to ask forgiveness for. The word "debt" (*opheilēma*) means to owe something. Our selfish behavior and disobedience make us debtors to God. He has given us life and breath and everything, yet we rebel against Him. The word sin (14-15) is sometimes translated as trespasses (*paráptōma*) which means to fall by the wayside, to be in error or fault. Luke adds a third word in his account of the Lord's Prayer – sins (*hamartia*) which means missing the mark (Luke 11:4). We all "fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Sin gets in the way of our relationship with God. If we want our prayers answered then praying for forgiveness becomes a necessity.

Psalm 66:18 If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened

Isaiah 59:1-2 Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.

By praying "Forgive us our debts" we are humbly admitting that we need God's grace and forgiveness every day. And God's wonderful promise is "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). God's forgiveness was made possible by the cross of Jesus.

Ephesians 1:7-8 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us.

When we think about the price Jesus paid for our forgiveness, how could any of us think that we don't need to pray "Forgive us our debts." As W. Phillip Keller put it in his book *A Layman Looks at the Lord's Prayer*:

It is in the white light of such overwhelming generosity and graciousness that the best of our behavior appears pretty tawdry. It is in the presence of the sublime Person and selfless love of our Lord, the Christ, that the loftiest of our inner attitudes look selfish. It is in the awareness of the amazing mercy and goodness of our God that the best we have to offer is the simple admission that we are debtors to the grace and love of Him who loves us with an everlasting love."¹

Don't gloss over the Lord's instruction to pray every day "Forgive us our debts." It is the way to keep our hearts close to His heart and to humbly kneel before His throne. In the words of the old hymn: "Marvelous grace of our loving Lord / Grace that exceeds our sin and guilt... / Grace that is greater than all our sin!"²

¹ W. Phillip Keller. *A Layman Looks at the Lord's Prayer*, p.117

² Julia H. Johnston. *Grace Greater than Our Sin*