

## LORD'S PRAYER: FORGIVE US

Monday, January 17  
Reading: Matthew 6:9-15

**Matthew 6:12** *Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

This is often the most difficult part of The Lord's Prayer to put into practice. We find it easier to praise God and bring Him our requests than we do to forgive and be forgiven. The Greek word used in this passage (*opheilō*) means to owe, thus we translate it as 'debt' in English. In Luke's parallel passage, the Greek word *hamartia* is used in the prayer (Luke 11:4). This is the common word translated 'sin' and means 'to miss the mark.' As Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We all miss the mark. We all owe the debt of sin and the price must be paid. But Jesus paid that debt on the cross. That made forgiveness possible! This request has two important parts to it.

1. If we love God, we are to have a **RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM**. This requires us to see sin the way God sees it. It requires us to examine our hearts and lives and admit when we have sinned and confess it to the Father.

"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:8-9)

2. If we love God, we are to have a **RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS**. Forgiving others is so important that Jesus mentions it again after He concludes the prayer (Matthew 6:14-15). Here another Greek word is used for sin (*paráptōma*). This word means 'to fall by the wayside; an error, mistake, or wrongdoing.' It is not so easy to forgive others who have wronged us. But when we harbor resentment or hold a grudge we are cutting off our communication with the Lord. He has called us to "forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13).

The Bible teaches us that God forgave us when we were still in our sins – when we were still His enemies (Romans 5:6-10). He did not wait for us to come to Him or be worthy of forgiveness (we never are!). He took the first step and offers salvation to all. We too are not to forgive only those who deserve it. We are to forgive even our enemies. Jesus stressed this point in His Sermon on the Mount.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children 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. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:43-48)

This attitude of forgiveness cannot come in our own strength. It must come from the Lord.

Forgive our sins as we forgive / You taught us, Lord, to pray.  
But You alone can grant us grace / To live the words we say.  
How can Your pardon reach and bless / The unforgiving heart  
That broods on wrongs and will not let / Old bitterness depart?  
In blazing light, Your cross reveals / The truth we dimly knew;  
How small the debts men owe to us; / How great our debt to You.  
Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls / And bid resentment cease.  
Then reconciled to God and man / Our lives will spread Your peace. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in David Jeremiah. *Prayer: The Great Adventure*, p. 149