

The Lord's Prayer Part 5 (Matthew 6:12)
"Forgive Us Our Debts"

Scripture: Matthew 6:12 - "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

WLC #194 Question: What do we pray for in the fifth petition?

Answer: "In the fifth petition, (which is, Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,) acknowledging, that we and others are guilty both of original and actual sin, and thereby become debtors to the justice of God; and that neither we, nor any other creature, can make the least satisfaction for that debt: we pray for ourselves and others, that God of His free grace would, through obedience and satisfaction of Christ, apprehended and applied by faith, acquit us both from the guilt and punishment of sin, accept us in His Beloved; continue His favor and grace to us, pardon our daily failings, and fill us with peace and joy, in giving us daily more and more assurance of forgiveness; which we are the rather emboldened to ask, and encouraged to expect, when we have this testimony in ourselves, that we from the heart forgive others their offenses."

1. Why did Jesus place the prayer for daily bread immediately next to the prayer for forgiveness of sin?
 - a. Because even if we have everything to survive for the day we have nothing if we don't have His forgiveness. How can a man truly enjoy a temporal blessing if His souls is uneasy and under condemnation?
 - b. Food can only alleviate the burden of hunger, it cannot alleviate the burden of a distressed conscience.
 - c. Temporal blessings are just what they imply, temporary. True forgiveness is eternal. Not one person in hell is comforted by the fact that they had all they needed while they walked the earth.
 - d. We should desire that God not put us off by giving us our good things in this life only but that in fact the best is yet to come.

2. We acknowledge the reality that original sin makes us debtors to God, and neither we nor any other creature can make it right.

a. Every one of us understands the definition of a “debt”. A debt is the result of owing something that you lack the currency to pay. God demands perfect obedience and we have been disobedient therefore, what we owe him is impossible for us to now attain.

b. Sin is the worst form of debt imaginable.

- It’s an infinite debt.

- We have added to the debt in ways we don’t even have an earthly record of. As our sin multiplies, we have no idea what it is we cumulatively owe.

- Our debts are the worst kind because they are inexcusable. Even if we deny the debt exists, God can show the receipts that prove what we owe. (Psalm 50:21 – “These things you have done, and I kept silent; You thought that I was altogether like you; But I will rebuke you, And set them in order before your eyes.”

- We can’t flee in any successful effort to escape the debt we owe. Even if we try, God can easily dispatch the wind and the waves like he did Jonah, to bring us to our appointed place.

- We’re not even capable of being good debtors. We hate our creditor, we don’t want to repay what we owe, we’re not concerned with actual justice but rather we live in fear only concerned about the consequences we might face if caught.

- “If sin be a debt, let us be humbled” (Watson, pg 213)

3. Often men are able to admit in some point that evil exists in the world, sometimes they are able to go a bit further and admit that they themselves have sinned because of evil in their heart, but many are never able to admit that their very nature is evil.

- a. During the revival of Kilsyth in 1742 a woman approached her minister that her souls had been uneasy for about a month.
- She was convinced that unbelief was a great sin but was unconvinced that she in particular was a sinner. The only thing that bothered her about sin was that it put one under the wrath of God, it did not bother her that she had offended Him.
 - Two weeks later, after much prayer, was convinced of her own particular sins, was tearfully repentant that she had offended God, but was in no way convinced that she had a human nature that was totally corrupted from birth.
 - Four days of prayer and intercession later she noted that she “now saw that she brought a corrupt nature into the world that was inherently offensive to God and all that was good. She said she had accepted Christ in all His offices and righteous counsels to be hers in the site of God, seeing all her own righteousness as but filthy rags. She was comforted by Isaiah 61:10, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robes of righteousness...”
 - Joshua 7:19 says, “give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to Him..”. Let us not be bad debtors but rather let us be good debtors and confess the reality of our wretchedness before the Lord, only then can a man truly rejoice in the righteousness of Christ.
 - Only true forgiveness can ease a troubled conscience. Many find something that placates their troubled mind for a moment, but it’s always a counterfeit form of peace that cannot possibly last.
 - (Example of Ryan’s Conversation with the satanist and the peace he has)

- Only when conviction sensibly awakens the mind of a sinner does the sinner see his profound need for the saving forgiveness of Jesus.

4. Why does Jesus direct us to pray for forgiveness?

- a. Being told this reveals to us that man by nature has no interest in seeking his forgiveness. He's too busy chasing the things he actually desires.
 - Men don't seek after forgiveness because they don't feel the conviction of their own sin. Many die in the original state of the woman at Kilsyth before her awakening, "careless and apathetic".
 - The reality as Thomas Watson says it is this, "Few are convinced of what a deadly evil sin is.... in this condition they are even worse off than a vile insect, snake or frog. At least when the beast dies, it returns to the earth but a man will burn in hell for eternity".
- b. Our very life depends on being forgiven. If we aren't forgiven then we are but both dead and damned. The only thing a man should be concerned about is to labor for forgiveness and discover its mystery.
- c. But what if we believe that God would never forgive us, or even that He doesn't forgive easily? As sinful men we tend to imagine God's responses to us based on flawed thinking and inherent guilt rather than what He's revealed in scripture.
 - Jesus tells us to ask for forgiveness because God is inclined to give it. In Nehemiah 10:17 we're told that God is a God that is ready to pardon.
 - Exodus 34: 6-7 says that God is merciful and gracious, abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and sin.

5. How do we know if our sins have been forgiven?

- a. First of all, it cannot be known by our own intuition. Man is not safe trusting in himself to be the judge of whether or not he has received a pardon.
 - Lepers under the Mosaic law were never allowed to pronounce themselves clean, even if they had clearly healed from the disease. The only lawful way for a leper to be pronounced clean was by the word of the priest alone. The same is true for us, we can only rely on the word of God to give us such assurance.

- b. This begs the question, how will we know by scripture that we have received a pardon?
 - A forgiven man isn't awakened to sin and comforted, he is usually awakened to his sin terrorized, convicted, and then comforted.
 - Many men throughout history have become sensible of their sins but never have a conviction of conscience about a single one. Some even confuse this as peace when in reality they've never been closer to hell. A forgiven man is comforted after he has been convicted.
 - Solomon Stoddard once said that "The way of the Spirit's working when it does convince men, is by enlightening the natural conscience. The Spirit does not work by giving a testimony, but by assisting the natural conscience to do its work.
 - A forgiven man weeps with joy for his pardon and would rather die than sin against the one who set him free.
 - A forgiven man is full of faith. He loses any high sense of himself and puts all his trust in his savior. He sees himself as nothing in the transaction and gives all the glory to the God that set him free.

- A forgiven man looks at Christ with a new sense of profound admiration and love. Everything about his spiritual emotions and thoughts are elevated towards the glories of Christ and His holiness.
- A man who is forgiven is willing to forgive others.

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

²¹ Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”

²² Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.²³ Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. ²⁶ The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ ²⁷ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

²⁸ “But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took *him* by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’ ²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ ³⁰ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. ³¹ So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. ³² Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. ³³ Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ ³⁴ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

³⁵ “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”

6. Forgiving others and what it looks like.
 - a. The hypocrite wants forgiveness and all the blessings that God freely gives but he does not want to forgive others.
 - b. We are not allowed to be bitter, but rather we are to have forgiveness ready and available in our hearts at all times.
 - c. Any desire for private revenge to gratify an inward hatred needs to be mortified. There is no place for forgiveness in heart such as this.
 - d. All of our actions in forgiving or rectifying wrongs must be done chiefly to maintain a Godly peace. This allows for the offender to be called to repentance, not with vengeance in mind but an attempt to restrain an individual from becoming worse.
 - e. It is lawful to use the magistrate in some cases, but this too must be done with a Christ like love for the offending party.
 - f. The thought process is this, we are to work these things out together privately or with the help of our ministers, but sometimes ordained civil government must be used to prevent the personal dealings from escalating into sinful acts of revenge, which once again are not lawful in God’s eyes.
 - g. 1 Corinthians 6:7 is given to us as an example where the Corinthians flocked to the magistrate first instead of a last resort.

