

# The Lord's Prayer

## *As We Forgive*

Part 9 - December 7, 2008



John Wycliffe



William Tyndale

I've been curious about something since we began this series: How many of you are John Wycliffe fans? How many of you are William Tyndale fans? *Wycliffe* translated the Bible from Latin to English in 1395. *Tyndale* translated it from Greek & Hebrew to "modern" English in 1526.

How many of you say, "Forgive us our *debts* ..."? You're WYCLIFFE fans! How many of you prefer to say, "*Trespases* ..."? You're TYNDALE fans! So, who's right? Which translation is the *most* accurate? Forgive us our ... "debts"! Wycliffe wins!

This is the only line in the Lord's Prayer with a condition: Last week we looked at: "Forgive us our debts". Today we examine the condition: "as we forgive our debtors"



The two *greatest* barriers to peace are guilt and resentment. *Guilt* comes from what we do to others; *resentment* from what others do to us! Last week I said that the antidote to guilt is to *receive* forgiveness.

- The antidote to resentment is to *offer* forgiveness.

The second half of this line must have weighed on Jesus' mind; He picks up the thought as soon as He ends the prayer. Notice the word "For", it's like we would say, "because".

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. - *Matthew 6:12-15 NKJ*

Tyndale gets a consolation prize, because the word "trespases" in verses 14-15 is the best translation! "Debts" and "trespases" are both synonyms for sin.

The word "debts" brings to mind what people *should've* done for us but *didn't* do (what they *owe* us: money, love, respect, etc.). The word "trespases" brings to mind what people *shouldn't have* done but *did* (where they crossed the line and trampled on us).

Jesus isn't talking about salvation here; the Lord's Prayer was written for those who already know God as "Our Father".



And besides, that would be adding works to grace.

We covered this last week when we talked about “Parental forgiveness” and how sin breaks harmony, intimacy, and fellowship, but not relationship.

I believe Jesus is saying two things:

- A. If I routinely withhold forgiveness, it is *evidence* that I have *not* embraced and experienced God’s forgiveness of me.
- B. God is *not* going to restore my harmony with Him until I have honestly sought to restore harmony with others. This is for *my* growth, happiness, and Christlikeness.



Jesus uses the “debt” terminology in the parable of “The Unmerciful Servant”. That’s the one we filmed in the jail cell. In it, a King cancels his servant’s debt of about six *billion* dollars (200,000 years wages)! Then the servant turns around and demands payment from a fellow servant of about ten *thousand* dollars (100 days wages).

It ends with the king confronting his servant:

Then the master called the servant in. “You wicked servant,” he said, “I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?” - *Matthew 18:32-33 NIV*

The point is quite clear: A true experience of grace and mercy will make us gracious and merciful to others. The degree to which I’m willing to forgive clearly indicates the extent to which I’ve personally experienced His forgiveness.

Even as He hung suffering and dying at the hands of His enemies ...

Jesus said, “Father, **forgive** them ...” - *Luke 23:34a NIV*

Wow! We’ve been spectacularly *forgiven* on the cross, and yet we can be ridiculously *unforgiving* in spite of it.



You’ve probably heard the expression: “Hurt people hurt people.” Well ... Forgiven people *forgive* people. To remain unforgiving is to *not* take seriously or solemnly, the enormity of our own sin and the price Christ paid to provide *our* forgiveness.

At the end of that parable, Jesus said:

In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother **from your heart.**” - *Matthew 18:34-35 NIV*

Not just “forgive your brother”, *but* forgive him “from your heart”. That means it can’t just be words, it has to be actions. But, before we talk about what those actions are, let’s talk about what they are *not*.



I’ll give you five things forgiveness isn’t:

- 1) Forgetting; God has the ability to choose to forget sin; *we* don’t! We have to learn to live *with* painful memories.
- 2) Dismissing; forgiveness isn’t passing off an offense as insignificant. It doesn’t mean saying, “It was no big deal.”

By making the second debt \$10,000 Jesus doesn’t discount the *significance* of the sin against the *servant*. He simply contrasts it to the debt of six *billion* dollars!

- 3) Condoning; forgiveness is not about excusing or justifying or rationalizing someone’s inappropriate, hurtful behavior.
- 4) Resolving; forgiveness doesn’t mean a relationship has been restored. This requires repentance from the offender.
- 5) Pardoning; forgiveness doesn’t release an offender from the legal or moral consequences of their actions.

Those five things are *not* what Jesus is asking us to do.



So now, in order to appreciate what forgiveness-from-the-heart looks like, let’s talk about the five things that forgiveness is:

- 1) Surrender; we surrender the desire to get even.

Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. - *Romans 12:19 NIV*

First and foremost, forgiveness is to place into *God's* hands any desire to harm or pay back the person who has wronged me.

- 2) New Eyes; we make an effort to see the offender as a needy, weak, complicated, fallible, human being ... just like us!
- 3) Gradual; we commit ourselves to the process of forgiveness. Healing doesn’t happen just because we say the right words.

Just as you rehearse a grudge over and over, you have to release it over and over as well. First we forgive the offense; *but then* we forgive the pain of the memory, every time it crops back up.

- 4) Decision; forgiveness is not a feeling, it's a choice.

We must *decide* to release our resentment and set *ourselves* free; because, resentment will always rob *us* of true peace and joy.

- 5) Gratitude; forgiveness is expressed gratefulness. We don't *owe* forgiveness to those who've hurt us, we owe it to God.



There isn't much motivation to forgive if I only see it as an effort of generosity toward the person who wounded me. However, there *is much* motivation to forgive if I see it as an act of gratitude toward the God who forgave me. Gratitude to God motivates forgiveness.

Are you grateful enough to forgive your debtors? Unforgiveness is sneaky. We can harbor it without even being aware of it. Therefore we need to regularly test ourselves.



1. First, stick your finger out and point it at somebody. This is the **finger pointing test**.

Is there someone you *blame* for your unhappiness? It's healthy to assign responsibility in order to deal with it effectively, but it's not healthy to blame someone instead of working through and moving beyond my past hurts and offenses. "If it weren't for so-and-so my life would be great!" "If I'd had a different father or different mother ..." If we *continue* to point the finger, we haven't really forgiven.



2. Now, hold out your hand and count with your fingers. This is the **score keeping test**.

Do you keep tabs on those who have wronged you? Someone has failed you (neglected, betrayed, bullied, or abused you), and now, no matter how they try to make amends, it's all just repayment of a debt that can *never* be satisfied. If we keep score, we haven't really forgiven.



3. Now, make a fist and pound it into your palm! This is the **overreacting test**.

You ever said to someone: "You're just like ...!" Sometimes we react, not so much to the minor offense someone causes, but because it reminds us of someone we really resent. If you have unresolved bitterness toward a parent or an "ex", and your spouse just *happens* to act like them, all those years of pent up hostility are transferred, and the volcano blows! If we overreact, there's *someone* we might still need to forgive.

My only eternal hope is that God won't hold my faults against me. How about you? As believers, the greatest gift we can offer the Lord again and again is to forgive our debtors as He has forgiven us.