

The LPG

Choosing Defusing

January 31, 2021

Welcome to where we're learning to let the Lord set us free!

The question today is: **Are you a prisoner of unforgiveness?**



One of the keys to our freedom is **the LPG**, which stands for the **Lord's Prayer Guide**. Jesus directs us to daily "pray this way": **adore our Dad**, and **revere our Creator**, and **hallow our God** (by discussing your obedience and trust – or lack thereof), and **kneel to our King** (to plan to advance His kingdom), **yield to His will** as the Lord of our life, and then **request just enough dough** (so we're not distracted from our True daily Bread of Life), and then we **confess our mess** to start out fresh with our sins washed away and our slate wiped clean. Because, as we saw last Sunday, when it comes to asking Dad to forgive our daily debts, it's our duty.



But that's only the half of it. Today we're looking at the clause attached to our cleansing with the word "as": "Forgive US our debts, AS we forgive OUR debtors"; those who owe *us* an **apology**, or **remorse**, or **confession**, or **repentance**, or **restitution**, or all of the above! And *His* clause is easy to ignore when *our* claws come out. So Jesus picks up His thought the moment He says amen:



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 **[because; you see – about that "as we forgive our debtors"]** if you forgive men **their trespasses**, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **[He goes from debts (what others should've done but didn't, for you) to trespasses (what they shouldn't've done but did, to you)]** But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, **[when they cross the line]** neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. – Matthew 6:12-15 NKJ



Because, we *owe* our righteous Judge the paying-forward of the same grace and mercy we've received. In fact, just after washing the feet of Judas, the night before His crucifixion, Jesus said:

I **[as the ultimate Mentor]** have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. – John 13:15 NIV

So **we must learn from our Mentor and wash the feet of our trespassers**. The reason this goes hand in hand with our *own* cleansing is because of the two greatest barriers to peace and joy.

The first is **GUILT**. And guilt comes from the bad that *we* do to *others*. *Our* messes. And the only true and lasting relief is to **confess our mess and receive forgiveness**. The second barrier is **RESENTMENT**. And resentment comes from the bad that *others* do to *us*. *Their* messes. And the only true and lasting relief is to **profess our pain and offer forgiveness**. So, the very best way we can ever pray for true and lasting peace and joy, is to sincerely ask our *Judge* to forgive us *our* messes, as we – like our *Mentor* – forgive those who make mess against us.

And so we **PRAY**, “as we forgive our debtors.” And we **PAUSE** to recall anyone we hold anything against. And then we **PERSONALIZE** this portion by ...

... forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. – Ephesians 4:32 NKJ

[And] ... not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. – Romans 12:21 NKJ



And wipe away **GUILT and RESENTMENT**. And powder yourself with true and lasting peace and joy. Remember my challenge to try *kneeling* before our *King* when discussing the advancing of His kingdom? Well, **maybe we should try standing before our Judge**, because Paul says:



When you *stand praying*, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. – Mark 11:25-26 NIV

Actually standing before our Judge’s throne-of-grace while asking for forgiveness, would likely help to drive us to lean on our High Priest, and learn from our Master Mentor, who clearly says:

My *command* is this: Love each other as I have loved you. – John 15:12 NIV

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. – Colossians 3:13 NIV

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without *sin*. Let *us* therefore come **boldly** to the throne of grace, that we may **obtain mercy and find grace to HELP** in time of need. – Hebrews 4:15-16 NKJ

So we may boldly say: “The Lord *is* my Helper; I *will* not fear. What can *man* do to me?” – Hebrews 13:6 NKJ



Plenty! They *crucified* Jesus! Murdered most of the Apostles. Fearlessness to forgive isn’t based on ignorance. It’s based on courage that comes from focusing on our Mighty Mentor! When it comes to *us* forgiving others, **it’s not about our graciousness to them; it’s about our gratefulness to Him!** There’s no compelling reason to forgive those who’ve hurt me if I only see it as *my generosity*. But I’m *empowered* to forgive when I begin to see it as *my gratitude* to Christ who died, while He cried “Father forgive them,” (Lk 23:34) for the right to forgive *me*! So you see, **to be unforgiving is to be ungrateful to God.**

To illustrate this, Jesus tells about two coworkers in debt. One owes the boss about six billion dollars; and the boss *cancel*s his debt. But the guy turns around and throws his coworker in jail for a sizable but much smaller debt. This com'parable has always bothered me; because:

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?" 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 18:32-35 NIV

He un-forgives us?! Re-imposes the debt that's canceled on the cross?! And there's no second chance here; that boss isn't about to forgive him a second time. And he's not getting out until he repays. And he's not put in a debtor's prison where there's a chance of restitution; he's turned over to be tortured! And this is what Dad will do if we fail to forgive someone?

You can see my problem. Pastor John and I went after it in my sermon meeting, Tuesday. And I have to tell you, our meetings can get a little heated – almost *always* because of me. I get so frustrated when I'm too blind to make Scripture make sense. So I take it out on John and Noah. John was just as bothered as me, but he didn't like my fix, and he uses my own logic against me; how *dare* he. But then he has an epiphany. And I said, "You win!" And he's polite and tries to downplay it. And I said, "No. You win. You did it. Yours is way better than mine. It's airtight. It has depth. Wanna see what he said?"

It's all about what the jerk owes, and who it's to, and why. And it all begins when ...

Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to *seven* times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." – Matthew 18:21-22 NIV

Where's Peter come up with "seven times"? Commentators often point out that seven was regarded as a perfect number. Sure. But it's not *Peter's* reason. This is one of those wonderful moments where weaving the Word completes the picture. **Matthew is purple**, **Luke is green**.

[Jesus said] "If your brother sins against you, go rebuke him, and show him his fault, [We like that part – till you realize it's with gentleness and love] just between the two of you. If he listens to you, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you *seven times* in a day, and *seven times* comes back to you and says, 'I *repent*,' forgive him. you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, [seek reconciliation] take one or two others along, [who can help him understand] so that every matter may be established by the testimony of **two or three witnesses**. If he refuses to listen to them, [seek further reconciliation and] tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, **treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector**. [Which means? Love 'em! Earlier He said to "*love your enemy*," or you're no better than a pagan or a tax collector (Mt 5:46-47)] I tell you the truth, [concerning forgiving] whatever you **bind** [retain] on earth will be **bound** [retained] in heaven, and whatever you **loose** on earth will be **loosed** in heaven. [Later He says, "if you *retain* the sins of any, they are *retained*" (Jn 20:23)] "**Again**, I tell you [concerning seeking reconciliation] that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for [whether

reconciling or loving an enemy], it will be done for you by My Father in heaven. For where **two** or **three** come together in My name, [to help with the process] there am I with them.” **Then** Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord [Kyrios: master], how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? **Up to** seven times [a day]?” [Like you said] Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. Therefore, [Jesus went on to say to Peter] the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him *ten thousand* [the largest number they had a name for] *talents* [the largest unit of currency] was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master [kyrios: Lord] ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. [Peter’s the only disciple we’re told had a wife and a house (Mt 8:14)] The servant fell on his knees before him. [Like Peter did when he became an Apostle (Lk 5:8)] ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master/lord took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. [100 days’ wages; his debt isn’t minor, just minor by comparison] He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. His *fellow servant* fell to *his* knees and begged *him*, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay *you* back.’ But *he* [unlike his Lord] refused. Instead, *he* went off and had the man thrown into prison until *he* could pay the [100 day] debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master/lord everything that had happened. Then the master/lord called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I **canceled** all that debt of yours because you begged me to. [But canceled debt can’t be re-imposed] **Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?**’ [And *that’s* the *mercy* he owes his *fellow* servant, and the *honor* he owes his Lord] In anger his master/lord turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until *he* [the ungrateful servant] **should pay back all** [the mercy] **he owed** [his fellow servant in honor of his gracious lord. Get it? He only gets out of the dungeon if he releases his fellow servant from his debtor’s prison]. **This** is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you [Peter] unless *you forgive* [and loose the unpaid debts of] *your brother from your heart.*” – Mt 18:15-35; Lk 17:3-4 NIV

The strange thing about this dungeon is that **there’s no lock on the door**. And **that tormentor that Dad turns us over to turns out to be our own resentful heart**. (Ps 81:12; Rom 1:24) **As long as we hold a grudge, it holds us in bondage**, and torments us. And to get out, we got’a release that other guy that we’re holding in our debtor’s prison! But, we’re so afraid of letting the other guy off the hook that we keep hanging onto our **animosity** and **hostility** and **bitterness**, not realizing: **that’s the dungeon of our torment!** And we’re as free as we want to be.

And the worst of the worst is when one of our offenders sincerely says, “I’m sorry,” but we’re not ready to let ‘em off the hook. So **we stay in the dungeon after they’re released!** If there’s anyone you’d see suffer rather than receive undeserved mercy like yours, that grudge has still got’cha on the hook in the pit. That’s why the Apostle Paul lovingly, strongly warns us:

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

[In the beginning] The Lord said ... “If anyone kills *Cain* [the son of Adam and Eve, who killed *his* brother], he will suffer vengeance *seven times* over.” – Genesis 4:15 NIV

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive *my* brother when he sins against *me*? Up to *seven times*?” Jesus answered, **[You didn’t read far enough]** “I tell you, not seven times, but *seventy-seven* times.” – Matthew 18:21-22 NIV

[You see, Cain’s great-great grandson] Lamech **[later]** said ... “I have *killed* a man for *wounding* me ... **[Why? Because God’s wrath wasn’t good enough]** If Cain is avenged *seven* times **[by God]**, then Lamech *seventy-seven* times.” – Genesis 4:23-24 NIV

That’s what we do. You *wound* me, I *kill* you. **We’re wired to desire holy vengeance.** Our childish problem is, we think it’s within our grasp to dispense it ourselves while under the influence of emotions. But our Lord’s vengeance isn’t contaminated with selfishness and sinfulness and short-sightedness. It’s carried out with perfect impartiality and unconditional love to accomplish a much higher purpose.

So **when we take revenge, we’re taking something precious from Dad.** Which means we’re packing on more debt load of our own. Ever had a kid make a mess on you *while* you’re changing their diaper? That’s what we’re like when we’re asking our Father for cleansing while messing with unforgiveness!

Now remember, **forgiving doesn’t mean forgetting or justifying or downplaying or resolving or legally pardoning or trusting.** It’s purely a gift of gratitude and trust to Dad, to honor and glorify His name by choosing to begin to see each enemy as being just as messy and beloved as me.

So let’s relax in Dad’s Rock solid assurance of upholding justice. So we can focus on holding up our end, as He wipes away our sin, and start canceling out those outstanding. We owe Him that much. In fact, **we owe God the glory of showing the world His love, one canceled debt at a time, by paying forward the undeserved mercy we’ve received.**

Now let’s memorize together what we’ll personalize alone.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. 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. – Matthew 6:9-13 NKJ