

Sermon Series: 'The Lord's Prayer, Jesus' School of Prayer: Your Kingdom Come'

The Fifth Petition: Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors'

Matthew 6.12 and Matthew 18.21-35.

1. Jesus asks his disciples to pray for their own forgiveness and to forgive others alongside the petition for daily bread. *What does this suggest about the frequency of our need of forgiveness and the frequency of our need to forgive others?*

2. The Bible presents to us a Creator God who has the right to ask humankind to obey his laws. One definition of sin is that we have disobeyed God's laws. However in Matthew 6.12, Jesus gives us a definition of sin that is sometimes easier for us to understand. How does Jesus define sin in this verse?

'Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors' (Matt. 6.12 NIV 1984 has a good literal translation here).

b. What do we owe God, but have failed to give him? (See Matt. 22.37-38).

3. If in a human marriage, a spouse may become jealous when their partner has been unfaithful, so in our marriage-like relationship with God, God may become appropriately jealous due to his people's failure to love him.

What therefore do we need our great God and divine lover to offer us?

4. a. What is the difference between standing apart and condemning a fellow human being, and making appropriate distinctions between behaviours that are moral or immoral?

b. Why is it so offensive for the confessing Christian to stand apart and condemn a fellow human being? (Matt. 6.12, see also 1 John 1.8-2.2, and Matt. 7.1-5).

5. What is the only ground for our forgiveness and right standing before God? (Matt. 5.17, Matt. 20.17-19 and v28)

6. It is often very difficult to struggle, and pray, and learn to forgive when we have been hurt. So Jesus gives us a key to help us do this in Matthew 18.21-35.

a. What is the truth about his position before the King, the unmerciful servant failed to fully believe? (Clue: ten thousand talents = millions of dollars v24, whereas a hundred denarii v28 = a few dollars).

b. What does the disciple need to feel and believe about their position before their God and king, in order to be empowered to forgive others?

7. What is the difference between adopting an attitude of forgiveness and:

a. complete reconciliation (see Matt. 18.15-17).

b. restitution for a victim (Exodus 22.1-15).

8. Is it ever helpful for the disciple to give up on forgiving others? Discuss. (See also Matthew 6.14-15).

Are 7.a. and b. above always possible in this life? Discuss why or why not.

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