

Radiant Church, April 3, 2016  
Mike Rydman

**A Disciple's Heart...Seeks Forgiveness**  
**Matthew 6:12**

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

St. Augustine (who lived about 500 years after Christ) called this request “the terrible petition” because he realized that if we pray, “Forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors” with an unforgiving heart, we are actually asking God NOT to forgive us.

Jesus makes very clear what He means for us to hear:

**Matthew 6:14-15** *For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

The point had already been stated earlier in the Sermon on the Mount

**Matthew 5:7** *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*

A merciless, unforgiving heart will receive neither mercy nor forgiveness

**James 2:13** *For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.*

Mercy and being judgmental are mutually-opposed to each other.  
To show mercy to another sinner is a win for the Kingdom.

In a parable, Jesus taught of a man who owed his master 10,000 talents (\$6 billion dollars), and had the debt forgiven, yet that same man refused to forgive the debt of another man who owed him 100 denarii (about \$12,000 dollars; still a lot of money, but not \$6 billion)

**Matthew 18:32-35** *Then his master summoned him and said to him, You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you? And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.*

It is impossible for any of us to forgive someone else, unless we first see ourselves as sinners, no better than any other sinner on the planet.

I'm now going to say 3 hard things:

**An unforgiving person is an unrepentant person!**

**And an unrepentant person is an unsaved person!**

## And an unsaved person is willfully disinterested in being saved!

C.S. Lewis said this, “No part of his teaching is clearer: and there are no exceptions to it. He doesn’t say that we are to forgive other people’s sins provided they are not too frightful, or provided there are extenuating circumstances, or anything of that sort. We are to forgive them all, however spiteful, however mean, however often they are repeated. If we don’t, we shall be forgiven none of our own.”

Back to Jesus, in Matthew 6; who is He talking to?

The person who does not know Jesus, nor has experienced the forgiveness in Christ. And...

The religious person who can state the right answers, goes to church on Sundays, who leads an outwardly moral life...and hold a death grip on their grudges, like those same grudges are their most treasured possessions.

Grace is evident in someone who has forgiven someone else, even though bitterness and anger may reoccur. Struggling with forgiveness, being willing to struggle with forgiveness is still a sign of God’s grace.

And forgiving someone does not mean we have to continue to blindly trust the offender. But forgiveness leaves room for the offender to change, maybe over time and not without their being the source for further hurts, but still able to change by God’s grace.

**Matthew 5:44** But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

We cannot “pray for our enemies” without a forgiving heart,

If we’re honest, we don’t want those who have sinned against us to change as much as we want them to suffer, to pay a price equivalent to the hurt and pain they’ve made us feel.

When we experience sin against us, it often leads to:

Self-pity, which finds its roots in bitterness and an unforgiving heart

Depression can be the result of a bitter, angry, unforgiving heart turning inward, choosing isolation, trusting no one.

And ultimately, we get mad at God, for the hurt He allowed us to experience from people, especially those people whose sins have resulted in dramatic and unwanted life change for us. Because, ultimately, we want someone to blame, we want someone to pay for our hurt.

All of us have a tendency to be more aware of the wrongs done to us, and less aware of the wrongs we have done to others.

- When others are hurt, we assume they're being oversensitive
- When we're wronged, we tend to exaggerate our own hurt and the evil of the offender

And the next result is, we're living lives convinced that other people need God's forgiveness more than we do. Therefore, we feel justified to actually pray "forgive us our debts" while intentionally ignoring the second part that says "as we forgive our debtors."

**1 John 1:5-10** encourages our hearts to seek forgiveness for our sins: *"This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."*

We can sadly find ourselves spending more time trying to feel forgiven than we do to forgiving others.

A Christian is someone who **knows that they are a sinner**, that the good stuff in their lives does not exonerate them from their bad stuff; that they have and continue to sin against God and other people.

And a Christian knows that they have been **forgiven by the grace of God**. It's not earned, and it's not an entitlement. It's a gift, an undeserved gift.

A Christian knows they've been **forgiven of a lot**.

And they know that they have no right, no ground to stand on in asking God to forgive them if they are also unwilling to forgive other people's sins against them.

But, this is hard. It requires a super-natural work in our own hearts. It requires great faith.

**Luke 17:3-5** *Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying I repent, you must forgive him. The apostles said to the Lord, Increase our faith!*

A Christian knows that **the evidence of our being forgiven of our own deep sin is when we get better and better at forgiving other people who sin against us.**

Forgiveness is what makes for a healthy soul  
Forgiveness is what makes for healthy churches  
Forgiveness is what helps the world to see what Jesus is like

In teaching us how to pray, Jesus knows that we come to our Father with the burden of nagging guilt. In asking God to forgive us we admit our sins, bring them to the surface, mention them by name in His presence, and ask to be forgiven.

If your heart recoils at the thought of constant repentance and forgiveness, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to re-school your heart with God's steadfast love, grace and open arms towards you.

Ask the Spirit for the courage to face your sins and to help you ask for forgiveness daily. Thank Jesus for paying your debt on that hill called Calvary.

Praise Jesus because he offered forgiveness to his persecutors. Thank God for his nonstop pursuit of you. Praise God because he executed an impossible rescue of his wayward, prodigal children, and is bringing us safely home.

God doesn't want you to hide. He is willing and eager to forgive; He desires transparency and intimacy with you.

Bask in God's mercy and grace and begin to think about whom you need to forgive, or ask for forgiveness. Who are you angry or bitter towards? As you remember the debt from which you have been forgiven, it will be impossible for you to withhold forgiveness from anyone.

**Ephesians 4:31-32** reminds us why we forgive:

*Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."*

Has it been easier for God to forgive you than it is for you to forgive someone else?

1. When you pray, is repentance a theme or do you pretend your own sin doesn't exist?
2. Why do you think Jesus included repentance and forgiveness in the framework for prayer?

3. Is there someone you are struggling to forgive? Who and what are the circumstances? What is it you believe God cannot repair and restore in this broken relationship? Maybe write a list of everyone you struggle to forgive.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see the depth of forgiveness that was poured out on you at Calvary. Ask the Spirit to help you seek out the person (if appropriate) and tell them of your heart change towards them and why.

Thank Jesus for willfully laying down his life, restoring you to the Father. Praise Jesus because He is the King who gave up his life for His bride, the Church.

Thank God because He has forgiven you through Christ. Praise God; He is restoring all things. Praise God, he is bringing us back to the Garden, into perfect relationship with him again.