

The Lord's Prayer (Week 5)

Note that the petition we look at this week (Matthew 6, verse 12) needs to be read along with verse 14. The words familiar to most of us, are *"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."* The word in verse 12 is literally *"debts"* = that which we owe. In verse 14 it is *"offences"* = that which we have done wrong.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors

This week there are a number of important passages which help us to understand the full meaning of this petition.

There is background to the teaching of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Old Testament and Jewish tradition.

Read Leviticus 25 verses 8 – 17 and Deuteronomy 15, verses 1 – 6.

The idea of the forgiveness of debts was an integral part of the vision of the Promised Land. When the people of Israel entered the Promised Land there should not have been any long term poverty! Later, the prophets railed against the greed and depravity of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah: e.g. Amos 5, verse 10 – 24. Sadly, the "Promised Land" of the Old Testament did not fulfil the promise. We still await *"a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells"* (2 Peter 3, verse 13)

Meanwhile we, who have put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, live on earth – in exile, and we are called to be children of Our Heavenly Father. Our use of the Lord's Prayer reflects our dependence on the grace of God and his presence with us in our daily life.

As we pray for forgiveness of our short comings in word and deed (and in what we have left undone!) We need to recognise the responsibility that goes with the forgiveness so freely given to us by our loving Heavenly Father.

Read Matthew 18, verses 21 – 35.

Peter is often revealed as the disciple who asks awkward questions! In offering to forgive "seven times" he was being generous in suggesting a number more than double that recommended by the scribes. They suggested 3 times was appropriate! Jesus, wanting to teach the abundant mercy of our Heavenly Father says *"No! Not seven times but seventy times seven!"* He then illustrates this with a parable of the Kingdom of Heaven - a picture of the final judgement. It is time for the King to settle accounts with His servants (*"slaves"*).

A question! What do you owe to the Lord God? Remember the Prodigal Son. *"I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son!"*

In this parable *"the master of that slave felt pity and set him free, and he forgave him all that debt."* Our debts / sins have been wiped out by the shed blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. (see Hebrews 9 verses 11 – 14 for a comparison between the Old Testament sacrifice for sin on the Day of Atonement, and the offering made by Christ in dying for us on the Cross).

This parable shows the danger of a hard and unforgiving heart in those who would follow the Master. Note the punch line in verse 35! *"So also My Heavenly Father will do to you, if you do not from your hearts each one forgive his brother."*

The teaching summarised in this weeks phrase of the Lord's Prayer is used by Paul in Ephesians 4, verses 30 – 32. Let his be the last word! *" . . . be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you"!*