

# Practicing Divine Forgiveness

## INTRODUCTION:

- I. It's been said that the most essential, the most blessed, and yet most costly thing God ever did was to provide you and me with forgiveness of sin.
  - A. But what do we mean by this?
    1. Forgiveness of sin is most essential because it keeps us from eternal torment.
    2. Forgiveness of sin is most blessed because it enables us to have eternal fellowship with God.
    3. And forgiveness of sin is most costly because the Son of God gave up His life so that we might live.
  - B. When it comes down to it, deliverance from the guilt of sin, by real, genuine forgiveness is our deepest spiritual need.
    1. The reason it's our deepest spiritual need is simply because, without forgiveness, we have no hope of eternal life.
  - C. Therefore, I want us to take some time to examine three verses from the Lord's "Sermon on the Mount" where we learn that forgiveness is the only way we can ever hope to see the Lord in heaven someday.

1. In the middle of His brief lesson about how to pray, Jesus said we should pray: **Matthew 6:12** – *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*
2. The Lord went on to explain why we need to be willing to forgive our debtors: **Matthew 6:14-15** – *"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."*
3. Let's look at these verses in the context of everything the New Testament teaches on the subject of forgiveness to see if we are a forgiving person.

## **BODY:**

- I. The reason we need to pray this petition for forgiveness is simple: we have sinned. And since sin separates us from God, forgiveness restores that relationship.
  - A. The Apostle Paul vividly described the impact of sin when he quoted several Old Testament passages in his letter to Christians in Rome:
    1. **Romans 3:10-12** – *As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become*

*unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one." (Quotes from Psalms 14:1-3; 53:1-4)*

2. Then Paul concludes: **Romans 3:23** – *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*
- B. Unfortunately, sin lies in the heart of every man.
1. It's like a terrible virus that infects every living being.
    - a. Sin makes us susceptible to disease, illness, death, and ultimately, hell.
    - b. It's the reason for every broken marriage, every disrupted home, every shattered friendship, every argument, every emotional pain, and every sorrow.
- II. So, let's take a closer look at these three verses in **Matthew chapter six** and see why we need to be forgiven of our debts and why we forgive others of their debts.
- A. Most of us understand that even though we've been forgiven of past sins through our obedience to the gospel of Christ, we also need God's forgiveness from the sins we continue to commit.
1. Our past sins were forgiven when we were justified and cleansed by the saving blood of Jesus Christ.

- a. As a result, we were no longer under judgment, no longer condemned to spiritual death, and no longer destined for eternal torment.
  - b. **Romans 8:1** – *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*
2. Not only were we forgiven of our past sins, the extent of this forgiveness is literally mind-boggling.
- a. **Jeremiah 31:34** – *"I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."*
  - b. **Psalms 103:12** – *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.*
  - c. **Isaiah 53:6** – *"The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."*
  - d. **1 Peter 2:24** – *"who Himself [speaking of Christ] bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed."*
3. God simply could not pass over our sin unless He placed the punishment for those sins on someone else – therefore Christ died for us.

- a. God has forgiven us our sins (eliminated our sins) based on the one-time sacrifice of Christ on the cross.
  - b. It was there that Jesus bore our punishment, took our guilt, and paid the penalty for our sin.
- B. Even though we have been forgiven of all past sin, we still continue to sin.
1. Paul explained this dilemma faced by every Christian.
    - a. **Romans 7:14-23** – *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15 For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. 16 If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. 17 But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. 19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. 20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. 22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my*

*mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

2. So we require constant forgiveness of our sins.
  - a. **1 John 1:8-10** – *"If we say that 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 that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."*
3. However, the act of seeking forgiveness implies that we are also confessing our sins.
  - a. To put it simple, sin that is not confessed simply cannot be forgiven.
  - b. **1 John 1:9** – *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
  - c. To confess basically means to agree with – we are telling God we agree with God that we are wicked, evil, and defiled, and need His grace, mercy and forgiveness.
- C. But let's be honest, sometimes it's difficult to confess our sins.
  1. If you have small children or work with small children, you know that it's especially hard to get a child to admit he did something wrong.

2. In the same manner, we adults have just as difficult a time humbling ourselves to admit we have also done wrong things.
  - a. Both Satan and our prideful nature fight against any kind of admission of wrongdoing.
  - b. But confession is the only way we can be free from the guilt of sin and live a joyful life.
  
3. **Proverbs 28:13** – *"He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy."*
  - a. If you don't confess your sins, you become hardened. That's why, in the very next verse (**Proverbs 28:14**), Solomon says, *"Happy is the man who is always reverent, but he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity."*
  - b. This is why the apostle Paul wrote: **Ephesians 4:17-19** – *"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."*
  - c. **1 Timothy 4:1-2** – *"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving*

*spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy,  
having their own conscience seared with a hot iron."*

III. But even after we've confessed our sins out of a repentant heart, there's another prerequisite for our being forgiven by God.

A. Back in the "Sermon on the Mount" Jesus said the prerequisite for forgiveness is: "as we forgive our debtors." **(Matthew 6:12)**

1. The principle is simple but sobering: if we forgive, we will be forgiven – but, if we do not forgive, we will not be forgiven.

**(Matthew 6:14-15)**

B. Think of **Matthew 6:14-15** as the Lord's own commentary on the petition of verse 12.

1. Jesus tells us that when we have a forgiving spirit, "*your Heavenly Father will also forgive you.*"

2. But an unforgiving spirit prohibits us from receiving God's forgiveness. Why? Because an unforgiving spirit is sin!

C. The Lord illustrates an unforgiving spirit in the "Parable of the Unforgiving Servant". **(Matthew 18:21–35)**

1. Jesus said, **(vs. 23-24)** "*... the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.*"



- a. Although a talent was actually a measure of weight, it also had monetary value. In Biblical times, one talent was equal to six thousand denarii, and a laborer earned only one denarius each working day.
  - b. This particular slave would need to work six days a week for one thousand weeks (slightly more than nineteen years) to earn just one talent.
  - c. And yet, his debt was ten thousand talents! To pay off that debt, this slave would have to work six days a week for just over 192,000 years.
  - d. And if we're talking about a talent of Gold, at today's exchange rate, the debt would be well over six billion dollars!
2. Because, **(vs. 25-26)** *"he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'"*
    - a. His debt was so massive that it would have been impossible for him to repay.
3. Yet, **(v. 27)** *"the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt."*

- a. Can you imagine a master who would be moved with compassion so that he would forgive a six billion dollar debt?
  - b. That's the debt we incur when we sin against God – when we sin against the Creator of heaven and earth.
  - c. But sadly, this servant didn't appreciate what his master had done for him.
4. The Lord continues: **Matthew 18:28-30** – *"But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt."*
- a. This hundred denarii debt amounted to approximately three months' wage, and over time, could have been repaid.
  - b. But this amount was nothing compared to what the other slave owed.
  - c. The debt this servant owed was only a few thousand dollars, compared to the six billion dollar debts of the first servant.
  - d. And yet the first servant showed no mercy whatsoever, and would not forgive the debt owed to him.

5. The Lord describes what happened next: **(vs. 31–35)** *"So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."*
  - a. This is a picture of someone who is eager for God's forgiveness but is not willing to forgive others.
  - b. Never forget: *"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 6:14-15)**
- D. But let's be practical here. Have you ever heard someone say, or perhaps said yourself, "I can forgive, but I will never forget"?
  1. I understand there is no way we can permanently erase someone's sin against us from our memory.
    - a. I wish it were possible, but it's not. Sins committed against us will forever be etched in our memories.

2. But the person who says, “I can forgive, but I will never forget” isn't saying the memory of some sin will never be erased from their minds.
  - a. This person is saying they haven't forgotten, nor will they ever forgive.
  - b. They keep replaying the sins committed against them in their minds over and over – especially every time they see the person who sinned against them.
3. We need to learn how to practice "Divine Forgiveness" – the kind of forgiveness that God exercises toward you and me.
  - a. The sins we commit against God aren't erased from His memory either. But there's one major difference.
  - b. Do you remember what the Lord told Jeremiah? **Jeremiah 31:34** – *"I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."*
  - c. Although the sins we commit against God are never erased from His memory, when we truly repent of those sins and confess those sins, God deliberately chooses to never remember or recall those sins again once they are forgiven.
  - d. He deliberately chooses to never hold those sins over our head again. He doesn't hold those sins fresh in His memory,

ready to recall them and use them to indict us the moment we sin again.

- e. He deliberately chooses to never recall those sins.
4. And that's the kind of forgiveness we need to exercise toward those who truly repent of and confess their sins.
- a. Even if they never repent or ask for forgiveness, we can still refuse to constantly remind ourselves of whatever it was that they did to us – we can still refuse to replay those tapes over and over in our minds.
5. Some might be tempted to say, "If God doesn't forgive those who refuse to repent, then why should I?"
- a. Do you really think we have the right to put ourselves and the sins committed against us on an equal par with God and the sins committed against Him?
  - b. People who sin against us might harm us in any number of ways. But when we sin against God, we disregard His deity, His holiness and His sovereignty.
  - c. Sins that people commit against us are hundred denarii sins, but the sins we commit against God are ten-thousand talent sins – a debt we can never repay

6. Therefore, when others sins against us we need to put the memory of those sins out of our minds and refuse to recall them again in the future..
  - a. We may never be able to forget how others sinned against us, but we can refuse to allow those sins to interfere with our relationship with God.
  - b. We can say, *"I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."*
  - c. And we can also pray the same prayer Jesus prayed at His crucifixion on behalf of those who showed no desire for forgiveness.
  - d. Like Jesus, we can also pray, *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"* (**Luke 23:34**).
7. That's "Divine Forgiveness" – that's the kind of forgiveness Jesus taught His disciples in the "Sermon on the Mount" (**cf. Matthew 6:14-15**).
  - a. Unless we can exercise that kind of divine forgiveness toward those who sin against us, then we will never receive divine forgiveness for the sins we have committed against God.

## CONCLUSION:

I. So, what have we learned?

A. We've learned that we all have an ongoing problem with sin.

1. And sin does so much harm. But worst of all, it interrupts our fellowship with God and interferes with our effectiveness in serving Christ.

2. Therefore, God made provision for our sins by providing us with continual forgiveness.

a. But we receive forgiveness only when we confess our sin.

b. But the prerequisite for being forgiven is that we also forgive others – we need to forgive with the kind of divine forgiveness God exercises toward us (remembering our sins no more).

B. Can you truly pray, "*forgive me my debts, as I forgive my debtors?*"

Asking God to forgive you in the same manner as you forgive others?

1. If you can't, it's because there is still some bitterness and resentment in your heart toward someone who sinned against you in the past.

2. Don't let that person and what they did keep you from receiving the forgiveness of God, and ultimately a home in heaven.

II. Do you need forgiveness for your sins?

- A. Do you need to have your sins completely washed away by the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ?
1. If you do, then you need to do one of two things right now!
    - a. You either need to come to Christ, believing in Him to be the Son of God, repenting of your sins, confessing your faith in Him, and be baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins.
    - b. Or, as a child of God who is harboring bitterness and resentment and an unforgiving spirit in your heart, you need to purge your heart of that sin with the help of the Lord, by truly repenting of that sin, and confessing that sin to the Lord so that you also may be cleansed by the blood of Christ once again.