

“Lord, Teach Us To Pray” VII (Matt 6:12)

Introduction – The Christian faith is an experimental religion. It is a faith that changes the way we live, because it changes who we are at the very core. Dead hearts have been made alive. Men and women who loved the darkness by nature are now walking in the light by a new nature. Forgiveness has been given, and in that gift, we are given the ability and command to give the same. We must understand forgiveness in order to understand what Jesus is teaching us to pray in this petition.

Our Need For Forgiveness (Psalm 130:3-4) – As much as we need daily bread, so we need daily forgiveness. You live in a world that constantly teaches that man is basically good. This is a lie (Psalm 40:11-12, 38:3-5). You are taught that deep down, we really all love God (or a god) and seek after him. This is a lie (Rom 3:10-20). No man is free from sin. All men are indebted. Our sin is vast, both imputed and practiced.

No Man Can Pay His Debt – All unrighteousness is sin (1 John 5:17) and the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). We are all born in sin (Psalm 51:5) and therefore born deserving to die. The world of religions teaches that there are ways for you to pay your debts, but this is a lie. All of your works are tainted by your sin (Is 64:6) and even if you had pure good works, they are not the wages of our sin and so they cannot atone for any sin.

Our Only Hope is Forgiveness (Rom 3:21-26) – I cannot do anything to create a right standing between God and myself. “*I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus’ name.*” When Jesus died on the cross, He cried out, “it is finished”, a word that meant “paid in full” in the common usage of the day. We are justified by the work of Jesus Christ, and it is He that directs us to daily seek forgiveness for our sins (1 John 1:8-9).

Forgiving Others – There is a clear connection between our forgiveness and the forgiveness we extend. Jesus makes this clear in vv 14-15 as well as in the parable of the wicked servant (Matt 18:21ff).

Salvation Cannot Be Bought (Rom 11:6, 9:16) – Forgiveness is all of grace, so we must be careful here. Nothing can earn forgiveness, no man’s works are acceptable, and only the death of Jesus Christ is sufficient. Remember, Christ is speaking to His disciples, those who are able to forgive (Matt 5:7). “*What makes me merciful is the grace of God. But the grace of God does make me merciful. If I am not merciful, there is only one explanation; I have never understood the mercy of God, I am outside of Christ. I am in my sins, unforgiven.*” D. Martin Lloyd-Jones.

What Does Forgiveness Look Like? (Col 3:12-13) – Christ is our example, defining for us what it means to forgive someone.

Immediately – When forgiveness is sought, Christ grants it immediately (Luke 23:41-43). Jesus came to seek the sick, not the healthy. He came for sinners, not the righteous. He was looking to extend forgiveness, not looking to see if He could find it in His heart to forgive.

Fully & Completely – Christ forgives your sins fully, and it doesn’t matter how wicked the sin was. Trespasses against us are always much smaller in ratio to our trespasses against the infinite, perfect, holy God of heaven.

Restored to Full Fellowship – There is no probation, no purgatory. Christ does not put us in a period of testing to see if we really meant it.

He Forgives Often – There is no bottom to His grace. How many times have you been forgiven for the same sin? How many times are you to extend forgiveness?

Have I Forgiven? – Our hearts are deceitful. What are the fruits (evidences) of Christlike forgiveness?

No Retaliatory Spirit – Christ’s attitude is not One who is looking for an opportunity to ‘get even’, or ‘get back’. He is not keeping a record of our wrongs (Is 43:25). He is delighted in the reconciliation, for this reconciliation is what He has sought and is what glorifies His Father. Is this your attitude towards those you claim to have forgiven?

Honor To Those Who Have Confessed – Christ has no desire to speak poorly of those who are His covenant brothers and sisters. His desire is to be with them (Is 44:22), sing the praise of the Father in the gates with them, to enjoy the fellowship of the Spirit with them. Is this your attitude towards those you claim to have forgiven?

Presence of True Love To Those Who Have Confessed – Christ has not only forgiven you. He has sought you out. He has served you. He has provided for Your needs. He has loved you. Is this your attitude towards those you claim to have forgiven?

The Double-Gift of Mercy (James 2:13) – We are in great need of mercy. Our own sins are innumerable. We are also in great need of God to grant us His spirit of mercy towards others, for in our flesh we will not imitate Him. But “*mercy triumphs over judgment.*” This mercy has triumphed over you, has it not? Then this mercy will manifest itself in the fruit of forgiveness, tenderheartedness, longsuffering, grace, peace as much as it depends on you, love from a pure heart. All of this is tied up in this one little phrase – “forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”