

The Model Prayer
Forgive Us ... As We Forgive Others
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.
June 29, 2025

Text: Luke 23:32-43

Purpose: The Model Prayer calls us to seek forgiveness for our sins. We are all sinners in need of a Savior. Closely linked with that petition is for us to forgive others that have sinned against us. To be forgiven and to forgive are intricately linked. We desire forgiveness – therefore, we must forgive others.

Two little boys had gotten into a quarrel, but the next morning, Johnny took his cap and was headed to Bobby's house again. Surprised, an older member of his family said, "What! You are going to play with Bobby today? I thought you two quarreled last night and you said you were never going to have anything to do with him. You have a mighty funny memory, Johnny!"



Johnny looked a little sheepish, dug his toe into the carpet for a moment, then flashed a big smile on his face and said, "Oh! Bobby and me are good forgetters!"¹

One day a Sunday school teacher was teaching a group of young boys. The teacher asked Freddie, "Can you tell me what we must do before we can expect forgiveness of sin?"

Freddie replied, "Yes sir. We must sin."²

Today we all can say and know it's true,
"For all have sinned and fall short of the
glory of God." (Romans 3:23)



"Whoever keeps his
mouth and his
tongue
keeps himself out
of trouble."
Proverbs 21:23 ESV



If we were honest
with ourselves, all of us have at
one time or another had
something happen in our lives that
caused there to be a break in

fellowship with another person. I am sure over the past six
and a half years I have been here; I have probably said a
few things to individuals that must have seemed harsh or
hurtful. Maybe it was something I said without thinking.
Honestly, my mouth has gotten me into a lot of trouble over
the years. Maybe it was something I said in the pulpit
about which you may have a different opinion. I hope, if
that is the case with you, we can sit down together and work
through what caused that break in fellowship. I have found,
sometimes, you simply have to agree to disagree without
breaking fellowship – no matter how sharp the
disagreement may be.

Through the years, there have been some things that others
have said to me that, at the time, seemed harsh or hurtful. It
may have taken me some time to let go of that hurt. But if
we are to live in community together, we both need to be
"good forgetters as well!"

Today we come to a section in the
Model Prayer that all of us have
encountered in some manner in
life. Jesus gives us six petitions in
this prayer, three are related to
God and the other three are related to ourselves.

THE MODEL PRAYER

- *A pattern for all praying that is outlined
different ways but most often divided into two
sets of elements:
- *First set is about God and His glory:
 - *"Hallowed be Thy name"
 - *"Thy Kingdom come"
 - *"Thy will be done"
- *Second set deals with man and his needs:
 - *"Give us this day our daily bread"
 - *"Forgive us our debts"
 - *"Lead us not into temptation"

Last week we began our petitions by asking God for bread.
We can all relate to bread. When I go to the grocery store, I
am amazed as to how many different kinds of bread there
are. Many people search out the specialty bread – the
premium bread, when in fact all we really need is the
ordinary in order to live. ³



This week we are examining the topic of
forgiveness. Jesus has a lot to say about
the subject and we need to hear it. As a
matter of fact, the only petition in these
six that Jesus expanded upon was on the

topic of forgiveness.

In the Model Prayer, Jesus taught
us to pray, "*And forgive us our
debts as we forgive our debtors.*"

(6:12) At the close of the prayer,
Jesus adds, "*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.*" (6:14-15)

"Forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us."

"Forgive us our debts
as we forgive our debtors."

It's not that God has offered forgiveness to us on an
exchange basis. Our forgiveness of others is not a condition
of God's forgiveness for us. After all the scripture says,
"*While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" (Romans
5:8) There is nothing we can do to earn forgiveness. If we
rightly see ourselves as sinners deserving death and
judgment from God, then we can grasp the magnificent
grace given to us through Jesus Christ. Once we catch a
glimpse of that grace extended to us, don't you think we
should extend that kind of grace and forgiveness to others?

Holding a grudge
is letting someone live
rent free
in your head.

If we clothe ourselves with such an unforgiving spirit, how can the Spirit of God work in us? We need the mercy of God operating in our lives as we go through our daily tasks. How much more does a forgiving spirit need to live in us daily?

It has been said, that when we hold a grudge against someone, the only one it is really hurting is ourselves. As a matter of fact, if we let that spirit of unforgiveness grow in us, it can actually poison our soul. I like this quote that says, “Holding a grudge is letting someone live rent free in your head.”

I don’t know if you remember the cartoon “Amos and Andy.” In that program there was a huge man that would slap Andy across the chest whenever they met. Finally, Andy had had enough of that and decided to take action. He said, “I’ll fix him! I am going to put a stick of dynamite in my vest pocket and the next time he slaps me, he is going to get his hand blown off! What Andy didn’t realize was that when that dynamite went off, it would also blow his heart out. The dynamite of hatred may inflict injury on someone else but in the end, it blows out our heart.



Debt vs. Trespass

I want to pause for just a moment to point out something that you may have noticed as we pray this prayer together. Often when we are gathered

**Forgive our Debts as
We Forgive our Debtors**

**And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive
those who trespass
against us.**

together, we stumble on the word “Debt” or the word “Trespass.” I looked through several translations and found the word “Debt” in the American Standard Version (ASV), the King James Version (KJV), the New King James Version (NKJV), English Standard Version (ESV), the Holman Translation (HC), New American Standard Version (NASV), and the New International Version (NIV).

Can you guess which translation uses the phrase, “*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us.*”? None do! I was shocked. That portion of that prayer comes from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer as well as the updated version from 1928. For generations Christians have been praying this prayer from the Lord’s Prayer using the phrase “*Forgive us our trespasses*” – which came from a prayer book, not scripture.

So, which one is the right one? They both are. They convey the same idea, but upon further study of the Greek words used, you get a richer appreciation for the correct use of the word “Debt.”

In the Model Prayer in verse 12, the Greek word used is “*Opheilema*,” which is correctly (or so says Vines Expository Dictionary)

translated as “Debt.” It metaphorically implies our sin is a debt because it demands expiation, which means a payment by way of sacrifice or punishment is required.

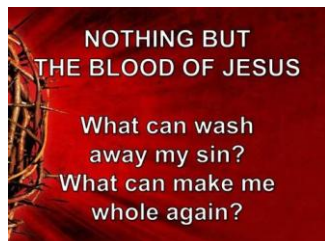
Seeking Forgiveness

- trespass (*parabasis*)
- misstep (*paraptoma*)
- sin (*hamartia*)
- debt (*opheilema*)

As you study the Old Testament, you see that they had a grasp on the gravity of sin and the payment necessary to satisfy or atone for that sin. The Bible teaches, “*Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission (removal) for sin.*” (Hebrews 9:22) That is why God instituted the sacrificial system as a way to remind Israel of the connection between sin and a need for a substitute. When Jesus came and offered Himself on the cross of Calvary, He paid the sin debt we could not pay.

When we pray, “forgive us our debts,” we are actually pleading for the blood of Christ to cover and remove our sins from our debt ledger.

What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

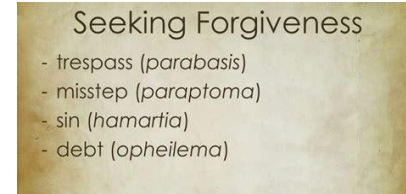


The very first step in our reconciliation with God comes through the blood of Jesus Christ. His sin payment was received by the Father because Jesus was the perfect reflection of a perfect Father laying down His life for all that willingly receive it. The scripture reminds us “*All that call upon the name of the Lord – SHALL BE SAVED.*” (Romans 10:13)

Over the years, I have spoken with people that let me know that they didn’t know if they were going to be saved until they stood before God in Heaven. After discussing this with them about their “hope so” faith, they agreed they actually had a “KNOW SO” faith, not a “HOPE SO” faith.

Thank God I know! Because God’s word says it! I have placed my all on Jesus Christ.

After the Model Prayer was given, Jesus expanded on this idea of forgiveness in verses 14 and 15 by using another Greek word. It is the word, “*Paraptoma.*” It is defined as a false step, a blunder, a deviation from uprightness and truth.



There is a great truth in these two words. The first word, **debt**, is related to our relationship with God, while the other word, **trespass**, speaks to our relationship with others. There is a close connection between being forgiven for our debts and trespasses and forgiving others for their debts and trespasses. These are not separated events in Christ’s opinion.

The First Step – Be Ye Reconciled to God

I believe we first must be reconciled back to God. Receiving forgiveness breaks open our hearts and a flood of joy can be in our life once that decision is made. We sing hymns that express that feeling.



What a wonderful change in my life has been wrought
Since Jesus came into my heart!
I have light in my soul for which long I had sought,
Since Jesus came into my heart!

Over and over, we are called, wooed, pleaded with, encouraged, admonished, to seek to set things right with God. There is grace sufficient, pardon enough, to cleanse any and all sinners that come to Him with a sincere and contrite spirit. He will never turn one away that comes seeking forgiveness.

So, our first step in the forgiveness circle is to be reconciled with God.

The Second Step – Be Ye Reconciled to One Another

The second step involves our being reconciled with one another. The connection between God's forgiveness and our forgiveness cannot be overstated.



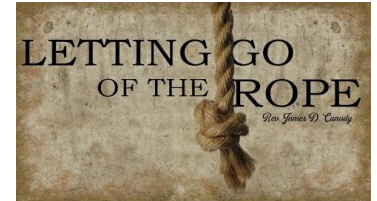
You may say,
You just don't know what that person did to me!
They cheated me out of what was rightfully mine!
They physically or emotionally did awful things to me!
They took something from me that I can never get back!

To all of that, I do not have all the answers. I only have what scripture says. We are to forgive others. That does not mean we are to continue to allow the other person to abuse us, take advantage of us, or make ourselves vulnerable again. We are admonished in scripture to be "*wise as serpents but as innocent as doves.*" (Matthew 10:16) This is something that needs to be worked out on a case-by-case basis and with much prayer and seeking the mind of God.

FORGIVENESS IS A DECISION

We must take positive steps to make a decision to forgive. Just as Love is a decision, Forgiveness is also a decision we make!

Corrie ten Boom likened forgiveness to letting go of a bell rope. The church I attended growing up in Drakes Branch Virginia, had a bell in its tower that you rang when you pulled the rope. If you have ever had the opportunity to ring one, you know you have to tug on the rope a while before the bell gets going. Once it begins to ring, you only have to give it a gentle tug to keep it going.



Corrie ten Boom said forgiveness is letting go of the rope. It is just that simple. When you do let go of the rope, the bell will keep ringing. Momentum will continue to work and the bell will continue to ring. Once you take your hand off the bell, it gets slower and the bell eventually stops ringing.

Forgiveness is much the same way. When you decide to forgive – when you decide to let go of the rope – the old feelings of unforgiveness may continue to assert themselves. You may be tempted to go back and pull the rope some more. After all, our unforgiveness had a lot of momentum. But if you affirm your decision to forgive, that unforgiving spirit will begin to slow eventually and will eventually stop. Forgiveness is something you have to do. It is letting go of the rope of retribution.⁴

I once heard Pastor Tim Lanier from Tanglewood Church of God describe our internal struggle with forgiveness in a unique way. He said we have a tendency to take our hurts and grudges with us for a long time. It is as if we take them and lock them in the dungeon of our mind. We may think



we have forgiven the other person but occasionally we go down to the dungeon and take that person out and beat them up and when we are finished with them, we lock them up again for another round another day.

That kind of bitterness only hurts one person – that is us. If you can go down to that dungeon and set that person free – fully forgive them, then you can be free as well.

A Call to Keep on Forgiving

Not only are we called to forgive, I believe we are called to keep on forgiving.

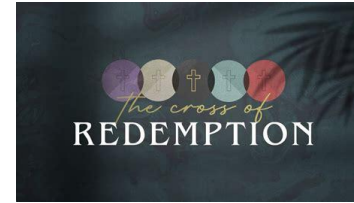
You may ask, just as Peter did, “*Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?*” (Matthew 18:21) That sounds kind of generous. I believe the Pharisees only required three times.

Jesus said, “*I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.*” Jesus would say, keep on forgiving. Don’t keep pulling the rope of unforgiveness. Let it go.

**Forgive
70 times 7**

What does that mean?

The Greatest Demonstration of Forgiveness



I am reminded of One that demonstrated the greatest example of forgiveness mankind has ever seen. That was the moment Jesus was hanging on the cross. After

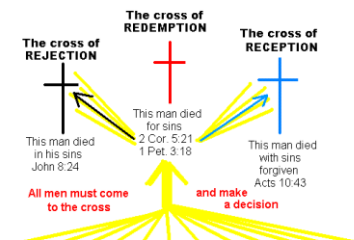
being beaten by the soldiers the night before, having His clothes taken from Him by the roll of a dice, mocked by the religious leaders in Jerusalem, stripped naked, humiliated, nailed to a tree, spat upon – Jesus said something that has echoed through eternity – “*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*” (Luke 23:34)

That day, as the crowds stood there, they witnessed a scene that has been remembered time and time again.

Forgiveness offered freely and willingly by the One that spoke creation into existence – now hanging on a cross for the entire world to see.

Calvary’s hill had three crosses that day. In the middle you find Jesus the Christ dying for the sin of mankind. On each side, you find two thieves condemned and now crucified for their crimes.

On one side, one of the thieves petitioned Christ to “*remember me when you come into your kingdom.*” Here was a sinner acknowledging his sin and seeking a Savior – and he found one, right there beside him. That repentant sinner was hanging on a **Cross of Reception**. He was receptive to hear and receive the gospel message. Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.



On the other side of Jesus was also a condemned thief. This thief had nothing but contempt for Jesus. He joined in with the mocking jeers of the crowd. He said, *“If you are the Christ, save yourself and us.”* (Luke 23:39) This man could not see himself in need of a Savior and therefore did not turn to his only hope for eternity. That man hung upon a **Cross of Rejection.**

Jesus was there in the center of those two thieves on a **Cross of Redemption.** The thief on the Cross of Reception was shown mercy and grace from God even though it was at the very last minute. When that thief turned to Christ, Jesus said, *“Today, you shall be with me in Paradise.”* (Luke 23:43) The sinner did not deserve forgiveness. If the truth be revealed – neither do we.⁵

Clara Barton, the founder of the Red Cross was once asked if she remembered an especially cruel thing done to her years before. When she seemed not to recall it, a friend said, “Don’t you remember?” Miss Barton said, “I distinctly remember forgetting it.”⁶



God has forgiven us; it is now time that we forgive others so that we can get on with the business God has appointed for us.

We are called to be peacemakers in a world filled with war. We are called to help others to be reconciled to God in a world filled with people that do not know there is a Savior. We are called to be Ambassadors in a world controlled and dominated by Satan.

We are God’s children called to forgive as Christ forgave.
We are God’s children called to give as Christ gave.
We are God’s children called to go as Christ went.



May we become more and more like Christ as we become more obedient to what He teaches in His word.

“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹ Illustrations of Bible Truths – Page 82 – Number 251 – Good Forgetters

² 10,000 Jokes, Toasts, and Stories – Number 3622

³ Richard Allan, God’s Psychiatry, page 115, general outline

⁴ A Treasury of Bible Illustrations, Page 168, Number 423 – Forgiveness Needs Momentum

⁵ Practical Bible Illustrations, From Yesterday and Today, page 164, number 454, Quote by David E. Matthews

⁶ A Treasury of Bible Illustrations, Page 171, number 430

