

## Forgiveness of Debts and Trespasses

### **Introduction:** *story* **Matthew 18:23-35**

Because most Americans are comfortable with debt, there is a tendency to skip over this prayer.

Under president Obama, the national debt doubled from 10.6 trillion to 20 trillion.

Under president Trump, the national debt has grown from 20 trillion to 22.5 trillion. That's 183,000 of debt per tax payer.

42 million students have borrowed money. 1.6 trillion in student loan debt

Americans owe 1.08 trillion in credit card debt.

60% of credit card users are carrying a high credit card balance month to month, and are being charged an average compounding interest rate of 17.2%

But debt in the days of Jesus was literally a matter of life and death.

*As we see in this parable, recognizing the magnitude of your sin from God's perspective is the starting point of forgiveness. Rob Green*

*read **Matthew 18:5-14** and lead in prayer*

### **1. The Request** (Matthew 6:12)

"debt" Because of sin, we stand before God morally bankrupt. We owe God more than everything we have or could ever accumulate.

When you pray this prayer you are saying "Treat me as I treat my neighbor" "Give me what I give them." "Lord, forgive me in the exact manner that I forgive others." (ML p. 126)

### **2. The Reason** (Matthew 6:14-15)

'The very first thing Jesus did after reciting this prayer is expound on the importance of forgiveness. And to really drive home what he meant, he purposefully chose a different word for sin with a different nuance that the one he used in the prayer...Jesus wants his disciples to understand *sin* in both the sense of owing a debt and the sense of trespassing into territory that doesn't belong to us.' -Jon Bloom

"trespass" **Illustration** of 4x4 trespassing and terrorizing us. "A trespasser violates another person"

"Unless you have forgiven others, you read your own death-warrant when you repeat the Lord's Prayer" - Charles H. Spurgeon. (quoted in RKH's commentary)

"There is no slightest suggestion that we are offered forgiveness on any other terms. It is made perfectly clear that if we do not forgive we shall not be forgiven." -C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

No one who cherishes a grudge against someone dare approach God in search of mercy. God treats us in accordance with the belief in our heart: if we believe it is good and beautiful to harbor resentments and tabulate wrongs done against us, then God will recognize that our plea for forgiveness is sheer hypocrisy—for we will be asking him to do what we believe to be bad. -John Piper

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### **Practical Points:**

- **Forgiving others is an evidence of being forgiven.**

Be careful: This is *not earning* forgiveness from God. But one who has truly experienced God's forgiveness and has been converted will give evidence in forging others.

***Place in Own Words:*** *This passage does not teach that we earn God's forgiveness by forgiving other people. Rather it teaches that those who refuse to forgive have failed to see their own sin and in fact may not be believers in Christ at all! It is yet another evidence for the saying, If they don't talk like a Christian, or act like a Christian, then they might not be a Christian. Quote from Rob Green*

"The teaching of the parable is not that God forgives us because we first forgive. The teaching is that the man who realizes what forgiveness is, forgives!" D. Martin Lloyd-Jones

Our relationship with God should be the blueprint for our relationship with others...Jesus forgives us because he chooses to, because he desires it, and because it is in his character to offer grace when we don't deserve it. -Mark Ballenger

The experience of forgiveness in your own life demands that you forgive others. Forgiveness is not an option. Those who experience forgiveness are commanded to demonstrate their appreciation to God by forgiving others.

With the second birth, you become a new creation, and a new inclination/trait/character to forgive...

"We demonstrate whether we have been forgiven by whether or not we will forgive." -R. Kent Hughes

God has forgiven a debt much bigger than anything anyone can ever owe us.

#### ➤ **Unforgiveness gives ground to Satan**

"Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs" (2 Corinthians 2:10-11).

We are warned to forgive others so that Satan cannot take advantage of us

"Most of the ground that Satan gains in the lives of Christians is due to unforgiveness." - Neil Anderson

#### ➤ **Forgiveness is a choice**

You can't force someone to forgive you. You must allow the person you offended the time they need to obey God by their own choice. -Mark Ballenger

But you can choose to ask for forgiveness. And you can choose to forgive when you have been asked to forgive.

*"Forgiveness is not forgetting. Once forgiveness is offered, we are never to use the past against someone. When we bring us the past and use it against others, we have not forgiven them. Forgiveness is a choice, a crisis of the will. We choose to face and acknowledge the hurt and the hate in order to forgive from the heart. Since God requires us to forgive, it is something we can do. If you don't let offenders off your hook, you are hooked to them and the past. Your need to forgive isn't an issue between you and the offender; it's between you and the Lord." Neil Anderson*

#### ➤ **Forgiveness is not peace at all cost**

"A failure to confront appropriately shows a lack of love." -Timothy Lane

- **Forgiving does not always mean immediate healing** But it does begin the healing process

Giving forgiveness can be very costly, and the more someone has hurt us, the harder it is to forgive -P.Ryken  
Your decision to forgive may not immediately eradicate the hurt, lack of trust, and anger you have towards the person you have forgiven. But if you see forgiveness both as an **event and a process**, the discouragement and guilt are minimized. T. lane

- **Forgiveness is always necessary to maintain and to restore relationships**

Sin breaks relationships, and restoration is impossible without forgiveness. - Rob Green

Through forgiveness God tears down the walls that our sins have built, and he opens the way for a renewed relationship with him. This is exactly what we must do if we are to forgive as the Lord forgives us: We must release the person who has wronged us from the penalty of being separated from us. We must not hold wrongs against others, not think about the wrongs, and not punish others for them. Therefore, forgiveness may be described as a decision to make four promises:

Four Promises of Forgiveness *\*adapted from The Peacemaker, by Ken Sande*

- I will not dwell on this incident.
- I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you.
- I will not talk to others about this incident.
- I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

By making and keeping these promises, you can tear down the walls that stand between you and your offender. You promise not to dwell on or brood over the problem or to punish by holding the person at a distance. You clear the way for your relationship to develop unhindered by memories of past wrongs. This is exactly what God does for us, and it is what he calls us to do for others.

- **Forgiveness impacts where you will spend eternity** (see again verses 14-15)

This is hard teaching. The prayer of forgiveness is the only petition in the Lord's Prayer that comes with a condition attached. -Philip Ryken

"Our virtue in showing forgiveness is one of the determinants of God's treatment to us." -Zon. Bible Dict.

"A man can as well go to hell for not forgiving as for not believing" -Thomas Watson

"For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy" (James 2:13) (see context)

*"Being merciful is the natural result of receiving Christ and experiencing the grace of God. If we are not merciful, we cannot have received Christ's mercy, and therefore cannot look forward to receiving his mercy in the last judgment." Sinclair Ferguson*

If anyone, regardless of what you profess with your words, can habitually and continually harbor unforgiveness in his heart, it is evidence that they have never truly experienced the sinfulness of their own sin and never experienced God's forgiveness.

### **Transition to invitation:**

Your ability to forgive others is always rooted in God's forgiveness of you. -Rob Green  
If you are unwilling to forgive, you have not experienced the forgiveness of God.

### **Challenge/response**

#### **A. debt, trespass, gospel**

‘we have seized a realm and exercised a right that belongs to God. We have violated God. We have committed a treasonous trespass, and we owe the debt of treason: death.-Jon Bloom

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. Colossians 2:13-14

Despite your sin, God sent His Son to die on the cross for you. Jesus, the sinless One, died in your place. He is willing to forgive you of all your sin and to bring you into relationship with Him.

God made forgiveness available through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God sent His Son to be born in humility, to be treated with contempt, to have few follow Him, and to be crucified on a cross in order to make it possible for you to be forgiven. Rob Green

God did not give us what we deserve; he gave us what we needed according to his mercy.

## **B. forgiving others**

‘And what Jesus has done, for those of us who trust in him, is pay that terrible debt completely. And what he’s requiring of us is to forgive others who have occupied a realm and exercised a right that belongs to us, who have violated us – since we have been forgiven a for worse violation.’ -Jon Bloom

The Bible says that it is appointed unto man once to die and then the judgment (Heb. 9:27). On judgment day God is going to examine you. What he is looking for in you is the evidence of genuine salvation which is evidenced in the attribute of forgiveness. Not looking for a POF, sinner’s prayer, church membership, etc. If you have been genuinely His child, he will discover proof of His character, which is forgiveness towards others.

Examine your relationships with others.

Spouse, parents, neighbor, relative, co-worker, friend, employer, church member, pastor, teacher, child

Close with emphasizing again need of *daily* forgiveness.

### Other Stuff

Greek Word for *debt*. See Greek Lexicon (page 598). Figurative. One who is guilty of a misdeed, one who is culpable, at fault

See Luke 13:4 Context great for tie to *repentance*

See Romans 8:12

-context that of life in the Spirit. *So then....*

‘Forgiveness is not a work by which we earn God’s forgiveness. It flows from a heart satisfied with the mercy of God and rejoicing in the cancellation of our own ten million dollar debt. -John Piper

C.S. Lewis *Mere Christianity* chapter 7 on forgiveness

In reference to this passage Lewis says, ‘There is no slightest suggestion that we are offered forgiveness on any other terms. It is made perfectly clear that if we do not forgive we shall not be forgiven.’

Note: Lewis focuses his chapter on forgiveness on basically hating sin but not sinner. May make good foundation for Wed. night follow up.

1. The Father and forgiveness
2. The Father’s family and forgiveness

“Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” (Psalm 32:1).