

Acknowledgement of Our Debts (6:12,15)

“^{6:12}...our debts...^{6:15}your transgressions.”

- We must seek the Bible’s definition of sin. Sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4), that is, the breaking of God’s Law as revealed in His Word.
- Who sins? The Scripture teaches us that *“there is none righteous, not even one...there is none who does good, there is not even one”* (Romans 3:10,12).
- What are the consequences of sin? The Bible teaches us that *“the wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23).
- No one receives forgiveness without realizing their great need before an absolutely holy God Who is a perfectly righteous Judge. READ Luke 18:9-14. Peter said, *“go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man”* (Luke 5:8). Paul wrote, *“I am the foremost”* of all sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). We gain nothing by trusting anything in us. We gain everything by confessing we have nothing to boast in before God.

Every human being is indebted to God.

The Prayer for Forgiveness (6:12,14)

“^{6:12}And forgive us...^{6:14}your heavenly Father will also forgive you.”

Our Need for Forgiveness

- The first three petitions (6:9-10) taught us that the priority of prayer must be God for the disciple of Jesus. The fourth petition (6:11) taught us to rely on God as the Source of our earthly needs. This, the fifth petition of the “Lord’s Prayer” (6:12), teaches us that God provides for the greatest, eternal need of our souls: forgiveness for our sins.
- No one receives forgiveness apart from repentance and trusting God’s way of forgiveness alone.
- The Bible teaches us that our sin and transgression against God make us spiritually dead

(Ephesians 2:1,5; Colossians 2:13). Because of this, a prayer for forgiveness is a prayer for true, spiritual, eternal life.

God’s Provision for Forgiveness as Our Father

- There is no true meeting the need created by our transgression apart from the way the Father has ordained and provided.
- God the Father is known as the Source of forgiveness in the O.T. READ Psalm 103:10-14.¹
- In the sacrifices of the O.T., it was a provision of God which pointed forward to what Christ would perfectly and finally accomplish in His death on the cross: READ Leviticus 17:11. God taught His people the principle of substitution in the O.T. Sin required death. God provided a means in the sacrificial system for a substitutionary death. The deaths of those sacrificial animals, though, only pointed to the final, all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ.
- The author of Hebrews, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes, *“according to the Law”* of God, *“without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness”* (Hebrews 9:22).
- Consider Jesus’ words with the cup of the Lord’s Supper: *“...this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins”* (26:28). See also Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14.

Forgiveness of sins is our greatest need.

The Forgiven Will Forgive (6:12,14-15)

^{6:12}“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors...^{6:14}for if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ^{6:15}But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.”

¹ See also Psalm 85:3; Isaiah 43:25; 53:6; Micah 7:17,19.

A Further Principle

- “...we...have forgiven” (6:12) is present active indicative, not past perfect (as modern English translations render it); we see the original verb tense more clearly in the KJV (and Geneva Bible and NKJV), “and forgive us our debts, as **we forgive our debtors.**”
This is a continual, present action or attitude.
- This fifth petition of the Lord’s Prayer is the only one Jesus elaborates on after He finishes the prayer itself. See the parallel in Mark 11:25-26.
- We see a connection between the vertical and horizontal in Jesus’ teaching about judgment, too (7:2).
- READ Colossians 3:12-13; see also Ephesians 4:32.
- “Unless you have forgiven others you read your own death-warrant when you repeat the Lord’s prayer.”²
- “Those that come to God for the forgiveness of their sins against Him, must make conscience of forgiving those who have offended them, else they curse themselves when they say the Lord’s prayer.”³

The Image and Imitation of God

- We are called to imitate God the Father (5:48; Luke 6:36; Ephesians 5:1-2; 1 Peter 1:15-16) and God’s purpose in our lives is that we are conformed to the image of God the Son (Romans 8:29).
- There is a sense in which every part of the “Lord’s Prayer” is an evaluation of a person’s dedication as a disciple of Jesus. This is true here: a person praying for forgiveness should see a mirror of the Father’s forgiving nature in his/her own life.

² Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892), in the sermon “Forgiveness Made Easy” (no. 1448), from Ephesians 4:32.

³ Matthew Henry (1662-1714), in his commentary on this verse.

A People Marked by Forgiveness⁴

- The peace and unity reflected in this teaching on prayer is hard-wired into the entire prayer through the second person plural pronouns. The “Lord’s Prayer” is fundamentally a prayer of the community which is in Christ by faith.⁵
- This same principle is seen in 5:23-24.
- We must be a people that pray that forgiveness from God be found in the lives of others, even if they have wronged us (Matthew 5:44; Acts 7:60).
- We must be a people who seek to restore those guilty of transgressions (Galatians 6:1-2). We should confess our sins to others and thereby seek their prayerful help (James 5:13-20).

Jesus’ Parable in Matthew 18:21-35

- Jesus’ parable (in response to a question from Peter) sheds helpful light on this petition of the “Lord’s Prayer.”

The fruit of the forgiven community must be forgiveness.

⁴ This phrase is from one of my favorite songs: “Let it be said of us we were marked by forgiveness. We were known by our love and delighted in meekness. We were ruled by His peace, heeding unity’s call: joined as one body that Christ would be seen by all. Let the cross be our glory and the Lord be our song; by mercy made holy, by the Spirit made strong. Let the cross be our glory and the Lord be our song ‘til the likeness of Jesus be through us made known” (“Let It Be Said of Us,” by Steve Fry, ©1999, Maranatha Music).

⁵ “The right of the eschatological [end-times] community to utter the Lord’s Prayer depends...upon communal reconciliation. Hence the Lord’s Prayer must be prayed by a church whose members have forgiven one another.” W.D. Davies & Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh, T&T Clark 1988), pg. 617.