

# The Lord's Prayer

*Matthew 6:9-15*

## Part 3

### Scripture Reading

*“Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”*

*“For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”*

### Introduction

This morning, we celebrate the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross by observing Holy Communion.

As we look to the Cross of Christ, we see many glorious themes of promise and hope. We see God's passionate and relentless pursuit of rebellious and hostile sinners. We see God's unfailing love extending to sinners the glorious gift grace and mercy. We see God diverting His righteous wrath away from “children of wrath” and onto His only begotten Son. We see God reconciling and embracing hostile enemies rather than judging and condemning them. We see God tearing down the veil that eternally separated humanity from His holiness.

Make no mistake about it; there's much to see when we gaze upon the glorious Cross of Calvary.

When we gaze upon the cross, that instrument of brutality, humiliation, and death, we not only see God's pursuit, God's love, God's grace, God's redirected judgment, and God's reconciliation – we also see God's unwavering desire to forgive sinners of sin.

The forgiveness of God thru the work of the cross is undeniable.

The Cross of Christ is about forgiveness. Jesus Christ suffered and died on the cross of Calvary in order to fulfill God the Father's loving desire to forgive you of sin. What is sin? Sin is that heinous offense of God's holiness and glory. To be clear, our sin was a stench in the nostrils of the holy God. Our sin offended God. Our sin inflamed God's holy anger. Our sin deserved the righteous judgment and condemnation of God.

If we don't understand the doctrine of sin and its consequences, we will never cherish the cross. Nor will we cherish the fatherhood of God, the lordship of Jesus Christ, the hope and glory of our salvation, and our privilege and calling to forgive others with the grace and love with which we have been forgiven.

Because of sin...

We deserved eternal punishment; yet, we received an eternal pardon. We deserved wrath; yet, we received righteousness. We deserved alienation from God; yet, we received adoption into God's family. We deserved judgment; yet, we received justification. We deserved retribution; yet, we received reconciliation. We deserved the horror of Hell; yet, we received the promise and glory of Heaven. And, we deserved the fury of God's wrath; yet, we received the mercy of God's forgiveness.

How did all of this happen? Such promises and truths were accomplished thru the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary.

## **Exegesis**

With these truths having been established at the forefront of our minds and hearts, let us now turn for a final time to the Lord's Prayer.

In our examination of the Lord's Prayer, we have determined that Christ is first and foremost concerned that our prayers be God-centered rather than man-centered.

By instructing His disciples to begin their prayers with,

*“Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”*

Jesus reminds His disciples that our prayers must first and foremost be offered as an exaltation of God's personhood, God's holiness, God's kingdom, and God's will. Remembering, claiming, and celebrating the glory of God is the primary purpose of our prayers. When we pray this way, our perspective, which is so often earthly in focus, is recalibrated to a heavenly perspective.

We have also learned that God is interested in meeting the very real and pressing needs we have on this earth.

By instructing His disciples to continue their prayers by saying,

*“Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”*

Jesus reminds His disciples that He is the great High Priest who sympathizes with their weaknesses and earthly needs. These needs include our daily needs of food, water, shelter, clothing, work, and relationships. These needs also include forgiveness of daily sins that break our fellowship with God, as well as our need for daily deliverance from temptation and evil.

At this point, most Christians bring their understanding of the Lord's Prayer to a close. However, to do so would be premature.

Verses 14-15 are meant to go along with the Lord's Prayer and should be seen as Jesus expounding on a truth He deems essential to our faith and prayer life. What is that truth? Forgiving others!

Notice what Jesus says once He has concluded teaching His disciples how to pray.

***“For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”***

In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus has highlighted the fatherhood of God, the holiness of God, the kingdom of God, and the will of God. He has also highlighted our daily needs, forgiveness of sins, and deliverance of from evil.

Yet, only forgiveness receives added instruction from Christ. This footnote from Christ should be taken with great seriousness and contemplation.

Why?

Simply put, our fellowship with God the Father and the effectiveness of our prayers are influenced by the way we forgive others.

Now, throughout church history, Christians have struggled with these words of Christ. Many have taken these words to mean that our forgiveness of others precedes God’s forgiveness of us. Put another way, many people have taken these verses to mean that God’s forgiveness is conditional – conditional on our forgiveness of others.

In one sense, this understanding is true. In another sense, this understanding is false.

Let’s address the falsehood first. As we learned last week, daily sin does not effect our position in Christ as adopted and redeemed children of God the Father. The moment we placed our faith in Christ, our position as sons and daughters of God was eternally secured. However, daily sin most definitely affects our fellowship with God. When we sin, our fellowship and communion with God is temporarily broken. Repentance and confession of our sin restores our fellowship with God.

In the same way, regarding verses 14-15, our salvific position as redeemed children is not influenced by our forgiveness of others. We are saved by God’s grace thru faith alone. Our justification and salvation in Jesus Christ is not conditioned on whether we forgive others. If it was so, not a single person here today could call themselves a Christian. We all would be doomed because well all have chosen, at times, to withhold forgiveness of another person.

Now, let's look at the truth. Although our position in Christ is not effected or altered when we refuse forgiveness of others, our fellowship and communion with God most certainly is. Just like with sin, when our wounded pride and inflated ego's withhold forgiveness from others, our fellowship and communion with God is temporarily broken. God cannot, in fact He will not, enjoy fellowship with you as long as you are withholding forgiveness from others.

It's as if God is saying to each of us here today, *"If you are refusing the very forgiveness I have extended you thru Christ, I cannot and will not have fellowship and communion with you."*

Commenting on these polemical verses, John MacArthur writes...

*"To receive pardon from the perfectly holy God and then to refuse to pardon others when we are sinful is the epitome of abuse of mercy."*

When we, with pride and arrogance, refuse to graciously extend forgiveness to others who have sinned against us or hurt us, we are abusing the mercy of God. On the one hand, we are enjoying the very mercy that forgave us of our heinous and wretched sin; yet, on the other hand, we are arrogantly rejecting another person's need for that same forgiveness.

Friends, we should not take these words of Christ lightly. Withholding forgiveness from others not only severs our fellowship from God; it also renders our prayers impotent and evokes the discipline of God on our lives.

Listen carefully to *"The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant,"* which is found in Matthew 18:21-35. These are the words of Christ Jesus your Lord.

**[Read Matthew 18:21-35]**

I wonder...how many times have we treated people – spouses, children, parents, friends, brothers and sisters in Christ – with an unforgiving spirit? How many times have we abused the mercy of God by withholding forgiveness from someone who desperately needs it from us?

Could this be why so many Christians feel so distant from their Creator and Savior?  
Could this be why so many Christians are experiencing the discipline of God in their lives?

Listen carefully to God's Word on this matter as it appears in other texts.

*"Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense."*

Proverbs 19:11

Has someone offended you or sinned against you? Maybe a spouse has sinned against you? Maybe a friend or coworker has offended you? Are you overlooking the sin and offense or are you allowing it to fester and blossom into anger and bitterness?

In Ephesians 4:32, the Apostle Paul writes...

*"Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."* Ephesians 4:32

Are you forgiving others the way God in Christ has forgiven you – graciously and unconditionally?

### **Transition Into Communion**

The Puritan writer Thomas Matton once wrote...

*"There is no one so tender to others as they who have received mercy themselves, for they know how gently God has dealt with them."*

The German philosopher Schopenhauer compared the human race to a bunch of porcupines huddling together on a cold winter's night.

*"The colder it gets outside, the more we huddle together for warmth; but the closer we get to one another, the more we hurt one another with our sharp quills. And in the lonely night of earth's winter eventually we begin to drift apart and wander out on our own and freeze to death in our loneliness."*

Here's the truth!

We're all porcupines. We stick people with the quills of sin every day. Some of you stick with your sarcastic comments. Some you stick with your "*I'm always right,*" attitude. Some of you stick with your irritability. And, all us stick with the idiosyncrasies of our personalities. When this happens, we chose to do one of two things. We can refuse forgiveness and live in isolation with God and others. Or, we can chose the way of Christ and forgive.

Christian, is your fellowship broken with God the Father? Do your prayers feel impotent and constrained? Is there evidence in your life that God is disciplining you?

If so, could it be that you are withholding mercy and forgiveness from someone in your life that needs it? Could it be that you have forgotten the Cross of Christ – that glorious instrument of forgiveness and reconciliation? Could it be that you have forgotten how gently and mercifully God has dealt with you?

This morning, we celebrate the mercy and forgiveness we have received from God by remembering the sacrifice that made it all possible – the death of Jesus Christ.

If you are a Christian here this morning, you have the privilege to partake of the Communion Table. However, we must first carefully examine our hearts. This morning, I challenge us all to explore our hearts for the purpose of identifying, confessing, and repenting of any attitude or spirit of unforgiveness.

If, thru this time of examination, the Holy Spirit reveals a person who needs your forgiveness, I encourage you to first be reconciled before you partake of the Communion Table. If you are unwilling to confess your sin of unforgiveness or to go and be reconciled, I respectfully ask that you abstain from Communion.