

A Life of Forgiveness (Matthew 6:12)

Introduction: ‘And...’ Which is more important, bread or forgiveness of sins?

“Our daily bread doth but fatten us as lambs for the slaughter if our sins be not pardoned” (Matthew Henry). See our Lord’s parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). “They take more care, (1) About dressing their bodies than their souls.... (2) About feeding their bodies than their souls. ... as if one should feed his hawk, but let his child starve” (T. Watson)

1. ‘...forgive...’ Why do I, as a Christian, still ask God to forgive my sins?

Why should we ask, if we have been given the “righteousness of God” (2Cor 5:21, Rom 3:23-26, 8:1)? First, because children should ask their father to forgive them when they’ve sinned. Second, because we still sin (1 John 1:8-9).

2. ‘...us our...’ Are we to ask God to forgive other people’s sins?

We’re to ask forgiveness for ourselves and others, as our Lord: “Father, forgive them...” (Luke 23:34, see Matt 5:44-45, Acts 7:60, Dan 9:4-8, Neh 1:5-7, Ps 106:6, Isa 64:5).

3. ‘...debts...’ Why does the Lord refer to our sins as ‘debts?’

(1) We have nothing with which to pay—we are utterly bankrupt, and just getting more and more in debt. (2) We don’t even have a desire to pay God what we owe him—in fact, if anything, we desire to be deeper and deeper in debt. “The wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). “Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness [of sins]” (Heb 9:22).

4. ‘...as we forgive our debtors.’ What does a life of forgiveness look like?

The heart is the wellspring of life. So love and forgiveness, to be real, must be found in the heart. “Forgive his brother from your heart” (Mat 18:35, NAS). “In your hearts do not think evil of each other” (Zech 7:10).

“Nearly all the personal problems that drive people to seek pastoral counsel are related in some way to the issue of forgiveness” (*Forgiveness*, MacArthur).

Question: Do I have to forgive an unrepentant person? See Matt 11:20-22.

Question: Does forgiveness mean that there should be no consequences? See 2Samuel 12:13-14. But do not justify having an unforgiving heart and an unforgiving life.

Anyone shown so much mercy should be the first to extend mercy to others. On the other hand, it is complete hypocrisy to want or to claim God’s forgiveness while being completely unwilling to forgive others.

We ought to be hungering and thirsting to forgive others and show the Lord and others this greatest reality in the world, the forgiveness of our sins, and the transforming love and grace and mercy of God in our Lord Jesus Christ.

It doesn’t mean that forgiveness comes easily; but we can definitely learn to forgive, and to forgive more graciously, more joyfully, and more deeply.