

Lord, Teach Us to Pray: Part Two
PRAYER IS ABOUT RELEASING

Key Verse: Matthew 6:9-15

Key Thought: Prayer is about releasing.

As we continue to move through the verses of *The Model Prayer*, hopefully we are learning how to pray more authentic and relevant prayers. We have already covered a lot of ground in this prayer, moving through the areas of praise, worship, hope and trust. In this message, we will get a little close to the place where all live. Here, we are going to have to deal with the matter of our sins. Not only are we going to look at the sins we have committed before God; but we are also going to deal with the matter of sin in our relationships with other humans.

I realize that just reading this verse makes some people nervous. No one likes to talk about the matter of sin, but I hope you will not shut me down today. I hope you will keep your hearts open to the voice of the God as He speaks to each of us. Now, while it is true that we have been saved by God's good grace and adopted into His family, it is also true that we all have a problem with sin. Our heavenly Father is perfect, but His children are dysfunctional at best.

As we have studied the various aspects of this prayer, I hope we have learned the truth that *this is a family prayer*. I call your attention back to **verse 9**. The first thing we are taught here is to pray, calling on the Name of our Heavenly Father. Everything we have been taught to pray is to be prayed within the context of our family relationship to the Lord. Notice the pronouns that make up the text of this prayer. Not even one of them is singular in nature. We are taught to pray to "*our Father*." We are to pray about "*our daily bread*," etc.

All the things that we are talking to the Lord about have to do with our standing as members of the family of God. Even when we come to this verse that deals with our sins, we are still praying as members of the family of God. This should give us some encouragement as we move into an area of preaching that is painful for everyone.

With that in mind, let's take a few minutes to investigate this verse. I want us to see that when it comes to our prayer lives and dealing with the problem of sin, ***Prayer Is About Releasing***. Why is this important? It is important because our prayer lives, the reality of His presence in our lives and the closeness and power in our fellowship rests on how well we deal with our sin problem, both vertically and horizontally.

I. THIS PRAYER INVOLVES A CONFESSION

When you and I pray this prayer, we confess before the Lord that we have a problem. This is a truth that many believers have trouble with, but the fact is, we may be saved, but we can and do still sin. This sad fact is spoke of in *1 John 1:8, 10*,

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” “If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word is not in us.”

We need a clear consciousness of our sins! Far too many believers act as though they think sin is something that happens in the lives of others and not to them. As a result, they never go to the altar to pray. They never confess their wrongdoings and their shortcomings. They never go to another believer to say, *“I am sorry. I hurt you and I was wrong.”* It never happens, but that kind of awareness of sins should be a part of our lives every day. To watch many believers conduct themselves and to hear them talk about themselves, you would think they were perfect.

Every saved individual should have a constantly growing hatred of the sin that exists in their lives! But most believers look over their own sins and failures and never seem to have a need to deal with them before the Lord Jesus. Let me tell you, when it reaches this place in your life, there is a problem!

One thing is sure, we all have a problem with sin in our lives and we all need help in dealing with that problem. It is also true that if I am going to ever get the help I need in dealing with my sin problem, then I am going to have to admit my guilt before God.

Our text uses the word “*debts*” to refer to our sin. This is one of five words used in the New Testament for sin. Allow me to share those words and a few places where each can be found.

Romans 3:23; Luke 15:21 – This word is used several times in the New Testament and carries the meaning of “*Missing the mark.*” It is an archery term and is used to refer to an archer shooting an arrow that falls far short of the target. It refers to the fact that in our sins, we all miss the standard of God’s perfect righteousness.

Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 3:13 – This word is often translated “*offenses*” or “*trespasses*” in the New Testament. It carries the idea of “*slipping or falling.*” It refers to sins that result from carelessness instead of intentional disobedience.

James 2:9 – This word is usually translated as “*transgression.*” It refers to “*an intentional crossing of the boundaries established by God in His Word.*” This is a far more conscious sin than either of the other two.

1 John 3:4; Matthew 7:23 – This word is usually translated either by “*iniquity*” or by “*transgression.*” It literally means “*without the Law or lawlessness.*”

It refers to high handed sin that is committed without regard for what God has to say about the matter. It is direct and open rebellion against God, His ways and His Word.

Matthew 6:12 – This word is translated “*debt, debtor or ought.*” It refers to something that is “*owed to another party.*” Here, Jesus says that our sin is like a debt owed to God and to our fellow man.

When the Lord calls our sin a “*debt*” He reminds us that when we sin, we owe Him something. Why is this true? When you and I sin, it requires that we use our bodies, our minds or both. The Bible is clear when it teaches us that both our body and our spirit belong to God. When the Lord redeemed us, He bought us out completely. If you are saved, the Lord owns your life. Therefore, when we use our bodies to commit sin, we are indebted to the Lord because we have used His property for our own purposes.

When I see and am made aware of the sin I carry within my own heart, then the only recourse I have is to confess my guilt before the Lord so the healing and cleansing process can begin in my life. ***Until I come clean before the Lord, I cannot be cleansed by the Lord!***

So, when I pray “***And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,***” I am confessing to the Lord that I have a problem with sin in my life and that I know I owe God a debt that I cannot pay on my own.

II. THIS PRAYER INVOLVES A CRY

If my greatest problem is my sin, then my greatest need is for forgiveness. Now, when we raise the issue of forgiveness, someone will always say, “***But I am saved! Am I not already forgiven for all my sins?***” The answer to that question is both “***Yes***” and “***No.***”

Judicially speaking, when we were saved, we were completely justified by God, declared righteous by Him and given perfect standing in His sight. This is the clear teaching of the New Testament and is our positional standing. It defines our relationship to the Lord. As far as God is concerned the child of God is righteous, perfect and free from the taint of sin. This is a glorious truth, and it is one that needs to be embraced by the church.

But, practically speaking, you and I Sin daily. We may be in a permanent relationship with God, but our walk with Him, and our daily fellowship with Him can certainly be damaged by the sin that comes into our lives.

“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”

Isaiah 59:2

Simply stated, our fellowship with God is temporary in nature and hinges upon our obedience to Him and our willingness to walk with Him.

We should be thankful for our relationship with the Lord and be very aware that we can fall out of fellowship with the Lord and that is why we need to have a consciousness of sin in our lives day by day, and maintain as close a walk with Jesus as is possible! We need Him and we must shun sin to have that fellowship be all that it can be!

With that in mind, when sin rears its ugly head in your life and mine, we do not need to try and hide it. We should never attempt to sweep it under the rug and pretend that it does not exist. We should rather drag it out into the light of God's Word, confess it for what it is and deal with it. This is the only way our sins can ever be forgiven and our fellowship restored with the father. God's way of dealing with sin is clear and painful, but it is productive.

Instead of hiding our sins, we should drag them out into the light and confess them as far as they are known. When it comes time to deal with them before the Lord, we should "*confess*" them to Him. This word simply means "*to agree with, or to say the same thing as.*" God wants us to reach the same place He is at concerning our sins. He wants us to see sin in all its horror, pain and perversion like He does. He wants us to deal with sin like He does. He wants me to judge it in my own life.

Let me remind you that this prayer is a family prayer. We are talking to our Father and He is not a cruel dictator or some terrifying monster. He is a loving, tender, gracious God whose "*mercy endures forever.*" When His child comes to Him, confessing sin, failure and shortcoming, God tenderly hears us, receives us and forgives us for His glory. He has far more invested in our relationship than I ever will or can even comprehend. He will restore me to that place of closeness and fellowship when I come clean about my sins and deal with them His way.

This simple prayer is about confessing our problem before the Lord and voicing our plea to Him for forgiveness. If we could ever learn to do it His way, we could walk in constant victory before Him.

III. THIS PRAYER INVOLVES A CONDITION

The most difficult part of this prayer is the last part. When this prayer is understood correctly, it is a prayer for God to extend forgiveness to me to the same degree that I extend forgiveness to others. Now that is a scary thought! Let's examine this truth just a little more deeply.

When I refuse to maintain fellowship with other believers in the family of God, it affects my own fellowship with God the Father. Regardless of what anyone does to me in this life, it could never possibly rise to the same level of my guilt before the Lord.

This lesson is clear: if I expect the Lord to forgive me when I cry out to Him, then I must be quick to forgive those who have wronged me. I am to forgive them to the same level that I have been forgiven,

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

Ephesians 4:32

If I refuse to forgive my brethren, then I should not expect the Lord to forgive me. After all, He is clear that my forgiveness before Him hinges on my willingness to forgive others.

The Bible is clear about this matter. When we have been wronged, offended and hurt by others, we are to carry that need before the Lord, leave it with Him and forgive the offending party,

“Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” Says the Lord.”

Romans 12:19

We are to forgive them and let their offenses go.

Let me try to make this matter practical for you this evening. When you have wronged someone, and you know it, you are to go to them, confess your wrongs and seek their forgiveness. Some people never grow in the Lord and wonder why. The answer is as simple as this: you need to go to those you have offended and say, “*I am sorry.*” Your fellowship with the family of God and with the heavenly Father will never be all it should be.

Others have been hurt and offended, and you wear the pain of that moment like a lead weight within your heart and soul. If you ever expect to get past it, you must forgive that person for what they said or for what they did. This may involve you going to them and telling them why you are hurt. If the person repents, then all is well. Put it behind you and get over it. If you go to them and they refuse to acknowledge their wrongdoing, then you need to take them before the Lord, forgive them anyway and get past it. If you do not get past the hurts and the problems you have encountered in your past, they will destroy you! When you harbor resentment and hard feelings in your heart because of what someone else has said or done to or about you, then you are hurting only yourself. You need to get before the Lord and deal with this matter once and for all.

Why is this so important? Your fellowship with Jesus Christ will never be all that it should be until you come to the place where your fellowship with your brothers and sisters in Jesus is all that it should be! Your prayer life will be hindered; your ability to praise and worship will be hindered; your day-by-day walk will be hindered. You must deal with this problem before it takes a permanent toll on your own life!

I am never more like Jesus than when I can forgive those who have offended me! So, when I pray this simple prayer, I am saying, ***“Lord, help me to be more like you!”***

In closing, Forgiving and being forgiven are more important than you and I can ever imagine. Notice the very first word of **verse 12**. It is the word ***“and.”*** This little word connects **verse 12** to **verse 11**. Just as I am taught to pray for the things I need to sustain life day by day, I am also taught that I need forgiveness day by day. I am a needy man! I sin against the Lord, and I need forgiveness. There are times when I am offended by others. At those times, I need grace to forgive them and get passed the hurt.

Praying is about releasing. It is about releasing my sins into the hands of God’s grace, so that I can experience His forgiveness. It is about releasing the debts others incur in my own life, so that my fellowship is not hindered with God or with man.

Are there debts in your life that need to be cancelled out? If so, bring them to Him and He will deal with them. Are there debts that need to be cleared up with others? If so, make it right, whatever it takes so that your fellowship with the Lord can be all it should be!

Place: FCA

Date: January 19, 2025

Time: 10:30am

After Service Song: Healer