

Place Lurgan Baptist 5:7:2009

## THE PATTERN PRAYER

Readings: Matthew 18:21-35 6:12-15

### 7. TO ERR IS HUMAN TO FORGIVE IS DIVINE

Some years a man had a problem with his neighbour. He felt that the neighbour had hurt him in some way, and he refused to speak to him. *For many years he carried this resentment, this grudge.* The man then became seriously ill, and he was told by his Doctor that he did not have long to live. If he had anything that needed to be settled before he died, now was the time to do it. The dying man called for his pastor. His pastor asked if everything was right between him and God. He said it was. Then he said, “*is everything right between you and your fellow-man?*” The man said, “*Well, yes, except for one man.*” The pastor asked, “*what is the problem?*” He said “*I haven’t spoken to my neighbour in years. He hurt me, and as far as I am concerned I will not have anything more to do with him. I will not forgive him.*” The pastor, “*but surely you don’t want to go to heaven with that on your mind and heart? You need to make that right with him, and ask him to come over and forgive you and you forgive him.*” Well, he thought about it for a while, and finally invited his neighbour over.

With trepidation, and yet seeking forgiveness, his neighbour came over, and pulled up a chair beside the bed. They chatted for a while and then the ill man said, “*You know I’ve had something against you for many years. Now I understand from the Doctor that I don’t have long to live. I cannot go into eternity without being sure that things are right with my fellow man, and I have been bitter against you, and I want to ask you to forgive me.*” The neighbour said, “*I sure will, and I’m delighted to forgive you.*” Then the sick man raised himself up in the bed and said, “***But understand one thing, if I get over this, it’s still on.***” Is that kind of forgiveness that Christ was talking about when He taught His disciples to pray “*And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,*” ? Somehow how I don’t think so. We often say, “***To err is human, to forgive is divine.***” This is not strictly true, for humans must forgive. The force of the adage is that human pardon must be fashioned after divine pardon. It must exhibit in some measure the elements of God’s treatment of us.

This means that to forgive means to cease from anger against those who have wronged us. It means that we let go off or cease to regard the offences committed against us, and that we treat our debtors as if they had not offended us all. *Thus, forgiveness involves a restoration to fellowship.* You see, when we pray for the Lord to forgive us our sins, we ask Him treat us in this way. When He commands us to forgive others, He requires us to deal with them as He has dealt with us. So when we pray “*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,*” we are making quite a statement. Let us look at this way.

## (1) A REALITY

What is the reality or what is the problem ? Sin. A Sunday School teacher had just concluded her lesson and wanted to make sure she had made her point. She said, “ *Can anyone tell me what you must do before you can obtain forgiveness of sin ?* ” From the back of the room, a small boy spoke up and said “ **sin.** ” You see, the focus of this verse is on sin and its forgiveness. For every time a Christian prays he must honestly face the problem of sin in his life. Now this problem is real, for though sin does not occupy the place in his heart that it once did, it is still a force to be reckoned with. Sin is a reality in the life of a believer. You don’t suddenly stop sinning when you become a Christian, nor do you lose your sensitivity to sin. In fact, you become more sensitive to it. As a Christian matures, the frequency of his sinning decreases, but his sensitivity to sin increases. Sin remains in us and cannot be ignored. Indeed in these verses we are confronted with,

### (a) **THE DEFINITION OF SIN:**

What is sin ? The Shorter Catechism defines it as “ *any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God.* ” John says, “ *sin is the transgression of the law.* ” ( 1 Jn 3:4 ) However, we will best understand by what Christ meant by sin by noting the terms employed in this Pattern Prayer. The Lord Jesus taught us to pray, “ *Forgive us our debts,* ” ( 6:12 ) in the parallel passage, Luke represents Christ as saying, “ *Forgive us our sins.* ”

( Lk 11:4 ) Luke uses the usual word for sin in the New Testament ( hamartia ) it carries the basic idea of missing the mark. It was an archer’s term. You shoot an arrow and it falls short of the target. That’s why Paul says “ *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.* ” ( Rom 3:23 ) My .... no matter how far you shoot your arrow, no matter how good you try to be, you will never reach the mark. And what is the mark ? Well, Christ stated it earlier on in the Sermon on the Mount when he said, “ *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father, who is in heaven is perfect.* ” ( 5:48 ) When you’re as righteous as God you hit the mark, but if you’re not you don’t. But we all have missed the mark. Now this other word “ *debts,* ” is an interesting word. It’s a word that carries the idea of debt. Sin is a debt. We were put here to glorify God, to worship God, to obey God, to serve God, but we don’t. Isaiah says, “ *All we like sheep have gone astray we have turned every one to his own way.* ” ( 53:6 ) Therefore we owe a sin debt to God. We are brought into heaven’s court and sued for damages we can never pay.

The only remedy for this debt is to declare spiritual bankruptcy and let someone else pay the debt for you, and this is exactly what the Lord Jesus did.

**I owed a debt I could not pay  
He paid a debt He did not owe**

So because of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus, we can pray this prayer and know it will be answered, “ *forgive us our debts.* ” My .... do you ever think of the things that

you owe God ? We owe God godly worship ( Jn 4:24 ) we owe it to Him to grow into fully mature Christians. ( Heb 5:12 ) We owe it to God to walk even as Christ walked ( 1 Jn 2:6 ) We owe it to God to preach the gospel to the lost ( Rom 1:14 ) to show the love of Christ in the home ( Eph 5:28 ) and in the church ( 1 Jn 3:16 ) My .... have we not to confess that we have failed in so many of these areas ? No wonder we need to pray “ *And forgive us our debts.* ” But think not only of (a) think of,

### **(b) *THE DOMINATION OF SIN:***

#### *1. Sin dominates man's life:*

It dominates his mind. ( Rom 1:21 ) He has a mind that is given over to evil and lust. ( Rom 1:21 ) Sin dominates the will. In Jeremiah's prophecy we read of men who wanted to do evil. ( 44:15-17 ) Why ? Because their will was controlled by sin. My .... our affections and emotions are also dominated by sin. John says “ *this is the condemnation that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light.* ” ( Jn 3:19 )

#### *2. Sin brings man under Satan's control:*

Paul says that men are guided by “ *the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.* ” ( Eph 2:2 )

#### *3. Sin brings man under God's wrath:*

The Bible tells us that unsaved people are “ *children of wrath.* ” ( Eph 2:3 ) They are bull eyes for the guns of God's judgement. My .... our whole life is stained with sin. And though sin no longer reigns ( Rom 5:21 ) it remains in us. Sin is ever with us. Paul says, “ *I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.* ” ( Rom 7:21-23 ) Sin easily besets us. Hebrews talks about “ *the sin which doth so easily beset us ....,* ” ( 12:1 ) You see, we can never in this world escape the presence of sin and we are always vulnerable to its attack. But notice not only (a) (b) but,

### **(c) *THE DESTRUCTIVENESS OF SIN:***

Do you know what happens when a Christian sins ? Incidentally, did you know that there are some who tell us that they don't sin any longer. They hold to the theory that their sin has been eradicated and that they are perfect and sinless. They must know more than the Saviour for here Christ assumes that believers will sin, and will need forgiveness thus He teaches us to pray, “ *and forgive us our debts.* ” ( 6:11 ) The word “ *and,* ” linking this petition with the previous one, both sharing the words “ *this day.* ” Therefore we could read “ *this day forgive us our debts,* ” for daily repentance is a most crucial thing in the believer's life. Do you know sin does ? It ruins our fellowship with the Father, it robs our life of power and blessing, it hinders our prayers. Was this not the very

thing that David feared ? That's why he said, "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*"

( Ps 66:18 ) Is there any iniquity that you have made peace with ? Is there any sin, habit, grudge that you have regard for ? If so, for God to answer your prayer would really be an encouragement for you to continue in that sin.  
(1)

## (2) A REMEDY

If sin is the reality, forgiveness is the remedy. The Lord Jesus instructs us to pray, "*forgive us our debts,*" that means forgiveness is available. Forgiveness is available because of the death of Christ. Now lets,

### (a) CLARIFY FORGIVENESS:

What is forgiveness ? What does it mean for God to forgive you ? Basically, forgiveness is God passing by our sin. It is God wiping our sin off the record. It is His setting us free from guilt and punishment.

1. God Blots sin out: He says, "*I, even I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for My own sake and will not remember thy sins.*" ( Is 43:25 )

2. God Covers sin up: The Psalmist says, "*Thou hast covered all their sin.*" ( Ps 85:2 )

3. God Sinks sin: Micah testifies, "*Thou hast cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.*" ( Micah 7:19 ) And, as Thomas Watson points out the result is not that of a

cork which floats to the surface but as lead which sinks to the bottom.

4. God Forgets sin: ( Jer 31:34 ) He literally eliminates any remembrance of our sin.

My .... does this not thrill you this .... ? Are you still overwhelmed when you think of what God has done with your sin ? Are you thankful to God for His forgiveness which is only possible through the death of Christ ? (a)

### (b) CLASSIFY FORGIVENESS:

For there are two kinds of forgiveness, positional forgiveness and parental forgiveness.

#### 1. Positional Forgiveness:

**Views God as a Judge.** God looks down and says, "*You are guilty. You have broken the law, and therefore you must be punished.*" But then He says, "*Christ bore your punishment when He died on the cross. He took your guilt, He paid for your sin. The price is paid, and I declare you to be forgiven.*" That is a judicial act, and by that act of positional forgiveness, all your sins, past, present and future are completely forgiven. You are justified forever. When does that happen ? The moment you place your faith in Jesus Christ, God's righteousness is placed upon you. ( Rom 3:24-26 ) Thus the price for your sin is paid and God is satisfied. That's why Paul says in Romans, "*who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth.*" ( Rom 8:33 )

No-one can lay any charge to God's elect. Now, if a Christian sins are all forgiven and God has declared him righteous why should he pray, "forgive us our debts?" That is answered by considering the second category of forgiveness.

## 2. Parental Forgiveness:

***This views God as a Father.*** Do you recall how this Pattern Prayer begins? "Our Father .....", here we are not dealing with God as a righteous Judge, but as a loving Father. Just because we have been positionally forgiven does not mean we will stop sinning. Although all our sins have been forgiven, each sin we commit affects our fellowship with God. The relationship itself does not end, but the fellowship can be marred. ***For example, today, on this very date we are thirty six years married.*** Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> July 1973, a union was formed that the Bible says should only be broken by death. Now that does not mean that we don't have our tiffs. Of course we do, we men at times can be hard to do with, and preachers will they are a thousand times worse. ***But do you know what happens?*** When we have a difference, the union is not effected, it's the communion, not the relationship, but the fellowship. Do you recall King David? He was redeemed yet during his lifetime he committed two terrible sins, adultery and murder and in (Ps 51) he beats out his confession.

Now remember David is saved, he has positional forgiveness, but in (Ps 51) he is asking for parental forgiveness. He says, "restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." (Ps 51:12) David wanted his joy back. He

didn't say, "restore my salvation," he said "restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." So positional forgiveness takes care of salvation, parental forgiveness takes care of the joy of salvation. Now that is what is Christ talking about here in (6:12) He is talking about parental forgiveness. I wonder is that what you need this ....? Sure, you are saved, redeemed, justified, but because of unconfessed sin you've lost the joy, the intimacy, the fellowship. My .... do you need to,

### (c) ***CLAIM FORGIVENESS:***

Is this not what Christ is speaking of here? Humbly confessing our sins to the Lord. John writing to believers says, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all our unrighteousness." (1 Jn 1:9) In the South Sea Islands monkeys are captured in an unusual way. The natives fasten a coconut with a hole in it to a tree. Some rice is placed inside the coconut. A curious monkey will examine the coconut and see the rice inside. He then puts his paw through the hole and grabs a fistful of rice. Now with his hand doubled up, it is too big to withdraw. That, monkey will scream as his captor approaches, but he will not release the rice so that he can withdraw his hand. One wise man prayed like this, "Oh, Lord help me to cooperate with you, so you won't have to operate on me." My .... why don't you do the same? Would you rather hold on to your sins, than to know the joy, peace, and blessing of God? Do you need to say to the Lord, "Forgive me my debts?" But the petition does not stop there. (1) (2)

### (3) A RESPONSIBILITY

Forgiving others. For Christ says we are to pray like this, “ *And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, .... For if ye forgive men .....*,” ( 6:14-15 ) Now these verses have been open to much misinterpretation. Some have thought that our eternal well being, God’s forgiveness of us, is conditional upon our forgiveness of others. Not so. We forgive because we have already received God’s forgiveness. ***Our forgiving attitude is the fruit of salvation, not the root of salvation. It is not the cause of obtaining God’s forgiveness, rather it is the consequence of obtaining God’s forgiveness.*** C.S. Lewis said, “ *everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea until he has something to forgive.*” Yet this forgiving spirit,

#### (a) IS COMMANDED:

Why should we forgive those who trespass against us ? Because Christ tells us to. The Bible says, “ *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*” ( Col 3:13 ) Paul says, “ *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.*” ( Eph 4:32 ) In spite of all we did to God, He forgave us, therefore we ought to forgive others. My .... do you belong to that sad company who will not and do not forgive ? Are you nursing the memory of someone’s wrongs against you ? Satan came and whispered in your ear and gave you a thousand reasons why you should not forgive your

offending brother or sister but Christ said you should for this forgiving spirit is commanded. Then again, it

#### (b) IS CONDITIONAL:

Its conditional on receiving God’s forgiveness. For look at ( 6:14-15 ) Are you forgiving ? If you’re not, God won’t forgive you and you will be going through the world with muddy feet. Sure, you will have positional forgiveness and the righteousness of Christ imputed to you, but the joy and intimacy in your fellowship with God will be missing. ***You won’t be of any use to God.*** When the 19<sup>th</sup> century Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson lived in the South Seas, it was his habit to have his family gathered around him each day for a worship time. At the close of their time together they would say the Lord’s Prayer. On one day he got half way through the prayer, then got up and walked away. His health was always suspect, so his wife assumed that he was feeling ill and she asked him, “ *is there anything wrong ?*” He said, “ *I am not fit to pray the Lord’s Prayer today.*” What about you ? Are you asking the Lord for forgiveness for your faults, when you won’t extend forgiveness to a brother for his faults ? Christ says you are wasting your time. James says, “ *He shall have judgement without mercy, that hath shown no mercy.*” ( James 2:13 ) The Lord will chasten you if you are not merciful to others, for we are to be forgiving.

How are we to forgive ? In exactly the same way that the Lord forgives us ?

#### 1. Freely:

Christ said, “ *Freely ye have received freely give.* ”  
( Matt 10:8 ) No strings attached, no fine print, no conditions. Real forgiveness does not say, “ *Well, I will forgive you if you don’t ever do it again.* ” ( Matt 18:22 )

### 2. Fully:

Just think about this. If the Lord refused to forgive one fraction of one of your sins, you would be in hell.

### 3. Finally:

You see, when God forgives, God forgets. ( Jer 31:34 ) A lady told her Pastor, “ *I’ll forgive Mrs. X. but I won’t have anything to do with her. I don’t want to see her again. I won’t let her in my house.* ” The pastor replied, “ *Suppose Christ treated you the same way, would have nothing to do with you, nor ever let you into his heavenly home ?* ” How often we react, “ *I’ll forgive, but I won’t forget.* ” Is this you ? Are you holding any grudges ? Do you have bitterness in your heart against a fellow believer ? Have you forgotten the great mercy you have received from God ? (a) (b)

### **(c) IS CHRIST-LIKE:**

John tells us that if we say we abide in Christ then we ought to walk even as He walked. ( 1 Jn 2:6 ) How did He walk ? In forgiveness. Do you see them as they drive those nails through His hands, as they spit upon His face, as they drive that spear into His side, as they crush that crown of thorns on His head and what’s the response of

our blessed Lord ? Hear him as He cries “ *Father forgive them .....* ” ( Lk 23:34 ) Many years ago the old American evangelist Sam Jones said, “ *I had a hard time forgiving people until I made up my mind that I wasn’t going to fall out with anyone until he treated me worse than I treated Jesus.* ” My ..... Christ is our role model. In fact, Charles Spurgeon said, “ *Go to Calvary to how learn how you may be forgiven and then linger there to learn how to forgive.* ”

My .... is this not our responsibility ? “ *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.* ” If you don’t you wont be of any use to the Lord. Charles A. Tindley put it like this,

**Nothing between my soul and the Saviour  
So that His blessed face may be seen  
Nothing preventing the least of His favour  
Keep the way clear ! Let nothing between**