

As We Also Have Forgiven Our Debtors Ինչպէս Մենք ալ կը Ներեցնք մեր Պարտապահներու

Matthew 18:23-35

Galatians 6:1-10

“Father in heaven, cancel our debts, as we also have canceled the debts of others.” Last Sunday we covered the first part of the fifth petition.

“God made (you) alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.” (Colossians 2:14-15)

What a relief it is that Jesus Christ wiped away our debts and nailed our sins to the cross. This is an act of GRACE.

Darrel Johnson says: “Justice is God giving me what I deserve. Mercy is God not giving me what I deserve. Grace is God giving me what I do not deserve.”

“Oh Father, you have every right to give me what I deserve—judgment—but I am asking you not to do it.” Instead, I am asking God to exercise mercy. “O Father, do not give me what I deserve.” And I am asking God to grant **me grace**. “O Father, not only do not give me what I deserve, give me what I do not deserve, **give me life with you!**” ¹

Let me stress Mercy and Grace: God erased the debts even when we did not deserve to be forgiven and He gave us a new, abundant life as an act of Grace. So how do you feel when you experience such mercy and grace?

It is a relief. Yet, there is something we cannot ignore. Jesus taught us to pray and ask for the forgiveness of our debts. In our daily prayers we should ask Jesus to wash our “dirty feet.” How did you do last week? Did you examine your life?

Now we can move to the next part. If you have not experienced God's grace in your life, you cannot move on to this part. **"As we also have forgiven our debtors."**

Last Sunday we read a parable about the two people who had debts (Matthew 18:23-35). Jesus told the parable as a response to Peter who was concerned about the issue of forgiving. He asked if forgiving seven times was enough. Jesus said, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times (Matthew 18:22 ESV). Where did this number come from? In Genesis, there is a terrible story of revenge. **Cain's** great, great, great grandson **Lamech** wrote a song that goes: **"If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold"** (Genesis 4:24 ESV). The Israelites learned these stories as a part of their tradition. Jesus is bringing a solution to this big problem called **revenge**, the "eye for eye and tooth for tooth" mentality. Do you know that Armenians use the name *Vrej*, which means Revenge? How about *Shnorhk*, which means Grace?

Jesus tells the parable of an unforgiving debtor. He owed the king thousands of dollars (talents) and the king forgave him. Yet, this man did not forgive another debtor who owed him just a hundred dollars. How would you feel about this story?

If you are asking God to forgive your debts, how come you can't forgive your brother and sister? Is it difficult to forgive? Of course, it is. The good news is that we can do with God's grace. As we experience God's grace in our lives, His grace will pour out into forgiving others.

Q: Does this mean that God will not forgive you if you do not forgive your brother or sister? Does God's forgiveness depend on how much you and I forgive others?

In my opinion, **God forgave humanity on the cross through His Son Jesus Christ once and for all. Once we accept Christ in our lives we are forgiven; it is an act of grace.** The act of the cross is not based on my actions. God canceled the debts on the cross. Period. It is given to us as gift. If you receive this gift of forgiveness, it is yours. If you reject His act, then His cross means nothing to you. In fact, you are rejecting His forgiveness.

Yet, when we are praying daily and asking Him to forgive our debts, sins, transgressions, we are acknowledging that we are still sinners and we need daily cleansing. But when we pray about mercy and grace from God and we cannot do the same to others, then there is a problem.

Darrel Johnson explains it this way:

“If I am not willing to forgive others then I am not asking God to forgive me, no matter what words I use. I am asking God to excuse me, but not asking God to forgive me.”²

Why do you pray to God and ask for forgiveness? Do you really mean it? How come you are using two scales for measuring?

The British preacher John Stott expresses it best: “**God forgives only the penitent, and one of the chief evidences of true penitence is a forgiving spirit.**”³

Let me approach this from another angle. Why should we forgive others? Can't we live without others?

The Fruit of the Spirit has nine flavors: **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.** All of those are gifts from God to us so that we can live together and manifest God's presence in our lives. None of those gifts are personal. All of these gifts are manifested in the community, you and I, you and the other...

In the Bible, 58 times we find the phrase **one another.** Love **one another,** greet **one another,** care **one another,** help **one another,** encourage **one another,** serve **one another...** and **BEAR one another...** You cannot fulfill God's plan by yourself. The Fruit of Spirit will be manifested in the church, in the community, in the kingdom of God.

Can you be a community when you have difficulty to forgive others?

What is Paul saying?

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. (Gal 6:2-3)

Why do we not bear each other?

We have many reasons to avoid bearing each other. We are busy; we do not have time; it is not our concern; someone else can take care of that need...and so on.

But I find that another reason that we do not bear each other. It is the wounds of resentment. **We have difficulty to forgive.** When we do not forgive, we create a distance between ourselves and that person. This also creates alienation from God.

Paul says:

¹²Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.
Colossians 3:12-14

James also have said about confessing to each other:

“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.” James 5:16a (NIV)

How do we forgive?

It starts with me. Did I experience God’s forgiveness?

Did I acknowledge that we need to repent and ask for forgiveness from God?

“...Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles us, and run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. ...: (Hebrews 12:1-2a)

David, yes David is a great role model of a person who sinned, repented and asked for forgiveness.

I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah (Psalm 32:5 ESV)

Let me give you an illustration about a man who fell in a pit.

"A man fell into a pit and couldn't get himself out.

-A subjective person came along and said, "I feel for you down there."

-An objective person walked by and said, "It's logical that someone would fall down there."

-A Pharisee said, "Only bad people fall into pits."

-A mathematician calculated how deep the pit was.

-A news reporter wanted the exclusive story on the pit.

-An IRS agent asked if he was paying taxes on the pit.

-A self-pitying person said, "You haven't seen anything until you've seen my pit."

-A fire-and-brimstone preacher said, "You deserve your pit."

-A Christian Scientist observed, "The pit is just in your mind."

-A psychologist noted, "Your mother and father are to blame for your being in that pit."

-A self-esteem therapist said, "Believe in yourself and you can get out of that pit."

-An optimist said, "Things could be worse."

-A pessimist claimed, "Things couldn't be worse."

"Jesus, seeing the man, took him by the hand and lifted him out of the pit.""⁴

Only Jesus can heal us, and take us from the pit.

Now, let me continue from the "pit". While you were in "pit", next to you there was another person who hurt you and she/he was in the "pit" with you.

I would like to give a few practical steps to help you forgive someone who has hurt you:

1. Bring to your mind someone who has hurt you. Someone you have a hard time to forgive.
2. Say the person's name to your heavenly Father. Tell Him what she/he has done to you. Open your heart...
3. Say to your Father what you want to be done to this person. You want justice to be served. You want the person to be punished, struggle, suffer, ...just open your heart to God. Be honest because He already knows what you're thinking.
4. Suddenly you realize that you are in a big "pit". Now, like the man in the "pit", you look up and see Christ is pulling you out of the "pit". He erased your debts and you are thankful. Yet, you tell him HOW HARD is to FORGIVE that person who too is in the "pit" and has hurt you.
5. You are liberated, and Jesus gives you strength to go back and bring the person who hurt you. Then you say to Jesus: "Jesus, forgive him the way you forgave me..."⁵

What a relief and joy. You are free. Christ has liberated you.

Amen.

1. Darrel Johnson, *Fifty-Seven Words that Changed the World*. P78
2. Darrel Johnson, *Fifty-Seven Words that Changed the World*. P76
3. John R.W. Stott, *Christian Counter-culture: The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* p149.
4. SermonCentral illustrations.
5. Adapted from Darrel Johnson