

## DEVOTIONAL AID FOR 30 AUGUST 2021 – 5 SEPTEMBER 2021



**UPPER  
HUNTER**  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Dear church family,

Possibly the most unsettling part of the Lord's Prayer is the fifth request: "Forgive our debts (sins), as we also have forgiven our debtors." I think there are two ways this can unsettle us.

1) Is God's forgiveness towards me dependent on my forgiveness towards others?

Forgiveness from God is so fundamental to the Christian faith that we can hardly overestimate its importance. What we are offered in Christ is forgiveness of our sins. When we trust Jesus, we are saying, "I am a sinner before the holy God. I desperately need forgiveness from God, otherwise I will perish. And, Jesus, you are my only hope for receiving forgiveness from God." This is what it means to believe in Jesus, or have faith in Jesus. We recognise the amazing gift of forgiveness offered in Christ, and we simply receive it by trusting Jesus Christ.

But what about this request in the Lord's Prayer? Forgive our sins as we have forgiven those who sin against us? Does this mean God forgives my sins if and only if I have forgiven those who have wronged me?

This request to God is a constant reminder to us that we can never pretend to have understood and received God's forgiveness towards us. If we have experienced God's forgiveness, we cannot harbour unforgiving hearts within us. Further, if we stubbornly maintain unforgiving attitude towards others, that may well be a sign that we have never actually trusted Jesus first place, and never have tasted the joy of being forgiven by God through Christ. Kevin DeYoung says, "You and I deserved hell. We were hopeless, helpless, and heavenless. But now we have life, redemption, forgiveness, and glory. If our lives are still marked by bitterness, grudges, and thoughts of retribution, we just don't get it. You haven't understood forgiveness until you've given it away."<sup>1</sup>

Of course, our forgiving towards others will never be perfect. It may come slowly, it may come with unresolved anger and mixed motives. Yet, our forgiving Lord wants us to constantly remember and give away forgiveness freely as we have received God's forgiveness freely.

2) Why do we need to continue to ask for forgiveness?

Another way this request may unsettle us is by the very fact that we are asking God for forgiveness when we have already become a Christian. We have come to understand that God has completely forgiven our sins by that one sufficient sacrifice, Jesus on the cross. So, why should I keep asking for forgiveness?

It is true that Jesus's sacrifice on the cross is sufficient grounds of our forgiveness in a legal sense. Theologians call it *justification*. When we put our faith in Jesus, God as our holy Judge does not pronounce a guilty sentence over us. We no longer have to fear a prison term, so to speak. Yet, there is more to our salvation than merely escaping a prison term. We are now brought into an intimate relationship with God as our Father. And sin (wrongdoing, disobedience, corruption, etc) is still offensive to God and it brings a strain in the relationship. We may even become conscious of our guilt and be troubled in our conscience. Now, God still loves us as our heavenly Father and He will not condemn us. Yet, God expects us to forsake our sins through confession and repentance. We feel sorrowful of our remaining sins and confess them to God with the expectation that God would forgive us in Christ. We ask God to change us so we may grow in holiness.

So we pray for forgiveness as Christians. We trust Jesus for forgiveness and we also extend forgiveness to others. May we continue to pray as Jesus has taught us, "Forgive our debts, as we have also forgiven our debtors."

Yours in Christ,

Timothy Lee

<https://www.upperhunterpc.com>

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin DeYoung, *The Good News We Almost Forgot*, p237.

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## THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM<sup>2</sup>

### Lord's Day 51

#### Q126) What does the fifth request mean?

A) "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" means, Because of Christ's blood, do not hold against us, poor sinners that we are, any of the sins we do or the evil that constantly clings to us. Forgive us just as we are fully determined, as evidence of Your grace in us, to forgive our neighbours.

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#### PSALM 51:1-7

- 1 *Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions.*
- 2 *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin!*
- 3 *For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.*
- 4 *Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you may be justified in your words  
and blameless in your judgment.*
- 5 *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,  
and in sin did my mother conceive me.*
- 6 *Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,  
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.*
- 7 *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

In this famous Psalm, King David speaks about his own sin and iniquity. David understood that he was at the mercy of God because of his own sins. We may or may not have committed spectacular sins like David did, but David's complete admission of his sins against God and total dependence on God for cleansing should also be our confession before God.

#### Prayer

Holy and gracious Father in heaven, I am aware of various sins I have committed just in the past few days. I confess that my sins in attitude, thoughts, words, and actions are despicable in your holy sight. On account of Jesus's perfect sacrifice, please forgive me. And wash me clean so I may live. I pray in Jesus's name. Amen.

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#### ROMANS 8:1

*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

While we confess our sins to God, we should also remember that there is no condemnation for us who are in Christ. God as a loving Father will discipline us for our wrongs. God will often let us face consequences of our wrong actions. Still, for those who are in Christ by faith, there is no condemnation from God. So confess your sins to God with confidence that He loves you more than you know.

#### Prayer

Gracious and loving Father, it is hard to believe that I face no condemnation from you. I struggle to believe that forgiveness is completely free, and I try to earn it by trying harder and getting more serious about Jesus. Please help me not to fall into such mistakes. Help me to completely rely on Jesus and know that peace in Him. I pray in Jesus's name. Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> The text of the Catechism is usually from <https://threeforms.org/heidelberg-catechism/>, but time to time, for the sake of clarity, I have also adopted the translation used in *The Good News We Almost Forgot* by Kevin DeYoung.