

HC 126 – Father, Keep me close to you!

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

God commands you to hallow his name.

For God's name to be hallowed you have to build his kingdom in your heart, church, and country.

To build his kingdom you must teach, believe, and live God's will – which is the Gospel.

To do God's will you need a sufficient supply of food and material things.

To get food and material things to build God's kingdom, you need to be close to him by getting his fatherly forgiveness. This is the message today.

Before we consider God's forgiveness so we can be close to him, I must distinguish between fatherly forgiveness and judicial (legal) forgiveness. Why? When you were justified (declared righteous) and you became a Christian, all your sins were forgiven (judicial forgiveness). (Non-believers must cry out to God for this type of forgiveness.)

But in your day to day life you sin against God and you daily need to come to your heavenly Father and ask for his forgiveness. It is this 2nd type of forgiveness (fatherly or paternal forgiveness) that we will focus on today. Remember, this is the Christian's Prayer.

Our headings are:

God promises forgiveness

You badly need forgiveness

You respond to forgiveness

Our goals are: That you would recognize your daily need for fatherly forgiveness so you can return to closeness with your Father so you can get the things you need to do the things you have to do to honor your Savior.

126 Q. WHAT DOES THE FIFTH REQUEST MEAN?

A. *And 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 neighbors.

God Promises to Forgive

1. You have debts that you cannot pay.

What are debts? The word "debt" normally referred to legal bills which had to be paid. Luke used the word "sin," ("Forgive us our sin -the general use of the word sin.) Luke 11:4). Christ was speaking of a moral or spiritual debt – you owed to God. Your debts are much more than dollars and cents. Every time you break God's law you owe him more.

Those who use translate the word "debt" as "trespass" are following the error of the

Anglican Book of Prayer and William Tyndale. “Trespass” means a “deviation from truth.” So trespass is a weak translation—half the meaning. You owe God perfect obedience as well – things that you should do but don’t. So your guilt is more than going where you shouldn’t.

Further, just praying for forgiveness of your trespasses robs the Lord the glory that should come from the fullness of his work.

2. Because you have debts that you cannot pay, God, out of love, bound himself to forgive you everything you owe...sins of omission (not doing what you should) and sins of commission (doing what you shouldn’t-trespasses).

3. God forgives you your debts because you are a child of God through the blood atonement of Christ.

Hebrews 9: 22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and **without shedding of blood there is no remission.**

God is obligated to forgive you. This may seem like strong language, but it is not. Christ redeemed you by his blood and God cannot reject you.

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and **just** to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If God did not forgive you your sins it would contradict his promise to forgive. But God always fulfills his promises.

If God contradicted his promise, then God would contradict his nature.

4. So you must confidently make this petition for your debts to be removed, regardless of the seriousness of your sins knowing God will forgive you.

Your record is clear and clean because of your judicial justification – that forgiveness you received when you became a Christian. **Because you are God’s child by adoption through Christ, you get God’s fatherly forgiveness for all your sins.** Count on it! And don’t think that someone who committed a terrible sin –worse than you committed - will not be forgiven.

Romans 8:1 **There is therefore now no condemnation** to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

And you also know that God forgives his children without limit.

Hosea 14:2 Take words with you, And return to the LORD. Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity; **Receive us graciously...**

Ephesians 1:7 In Him we have **redemption through His blood,** the

forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,

No child is afraid to go to his good father and ask for things, and neither should a child of God be afraid to go to him and plead for forgiveness...something you daily need.

1John 2: 1 **My little children**, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And **if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father**, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

What wonderful joy forgiveness brings- not only your first forgiveness, but every day when your heavenly Father forgives you!

You Badly Need Forgiveness

1. When you pray “forgive us our debts,” you acknowledge that you are a sinner in real need.

You acknowledge that you are guilty of the sins you inherited from Adam and your actual sins that you commit everyday. You daily add to your condemnation. Further, you sin in thoughts, words, and actions. Those actions include attitudes that are sinful (**Children, beware of this.**), ignoring of the correcting of a brother in sin, or not setting an example that is worthwhile of being followed by others.

Romans 3: 10 As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." 13 "Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps is under their lips"; 14 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways; 17 And the way of peace they have not known."

Psalms 130: 3 If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

2. And notice the language of the catechism: You are described not just as sinners, but as “poor sinners.”

Consider the language that David used to describe himself after he failed God and committed adultery and murder. He showed that he was spiritually very poor. Get the deep sense of his spiritual poverty.

Psalms 51: 1 Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me

from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. 4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight—That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge. 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. 6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

You respond to forgiveness

1. There is that strange part at the end of this petition: “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.”

What does that phrase mean?

Let me tell you what “forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” does not mean? **It does not mean that you cause God to forgive** because you forgive others. God does not forgive you based on your good work. **You are forgiven only because Jesus took your sins on the cross**, period. Only the blood of Jesus washes away our sins. And even if you did forgive, your forgiveness is never pure and never full. You often forgive so people would think good things about you. You often forgive and still hold hatred in your heart.

So your forgiving of others is not the reason God forgives you.

2. So what do we do with those passages that seem to suggest that forgiving others is the ground of God forgiving you?

Look at the Lord’s clear teaching on forgiveness and then you can apply it to the not so clear passages. This is a sound principle: Let the clear explain the unclear.

Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, (Just) As we forgive our debtors.

In this prayer there is no causation for your forgiveness. You can translate this verse this way: “Forgive us our debts, **just as** we forgive our debtors (recognizing their need for forgiveness).

3. Now look at the difficult passages now.

Matthew 6:14 "For if you forgive men their offence, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 "But if you do not forgive men their offences, **neither will your Father forgive your offences.**

Just as you forgive men their offences, just so your heavenly Father will also forgive you. And just as you don’t forgive men their offences, which means you are not a Christian, just so God will not forgive you. **Look at the next one. I will read this.**

Matthew 18: 21 Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus said

to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.²³ "Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.²⁴ "And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ "But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. ²⁶ "The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'²⁷ **"Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.** ²⁸ "But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' ²⁹ **"So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'** ³⁰ "And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. ³¹ "So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. **34** **"And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. 35 "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."**

The meaning is this: The one who doesn't forgive men their offences, which means he is not a Christian, just so God will not forgive him. This was a statement of fact; it was not the cause for action. Remember, Christians will never go to hell. Non-Christians will go there.

Conclusion:

God is obligated to forgive your sins if you are a Christian; God obligated himself to forgive your sins. Every Christian knows that he needs forgiveness, for his sins are a great debt that he owed but could not pay. He sins in thought, words, and actions (including attitudes, failure to set a good example, and ignoring correcting others). He knows that no payment, regardless of how rich he may be, can remove his sins – except Christ's blood. The Christian understands his need of forgiveness because he sees how much his fellow sinner needs forgiveness.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus:

1. It is not common to speak of yourself as needy and dependent, but you are. You are trained to think of yourself as independent – not in need of anyone. **But the Lord commands you to recognize that you are needy and you need the impediment of sin removed, so you can come near to him, so you can do the work he has called you to do!** Yes, to be close to God you have to remove any impediment, namely, your debts.

2. So you must ask God to cancel all your debts (things you shouldn't do, but you did, and things you should do, but you didn't) because Christ died for your sins of the past, present, and future.

3. Every time you look at your neighbor and remember he has sinned against you, forgive

him. This is good for him and this is good for you, as it reminds you of what you have received from him.

Finally, as Christians, we have all our debts paid in full by someone who loves us: Jesus. Do you still owe God? If Jesus hasn't taken away your sins you owe God. If you owe God you will have to pay for it with your life in hell. But there is a way out! Praise God there is! Like we do, call on God to accept Christ's death as full payment for all your debts and bring you close to himself.