

FORGIVE US AS WE FORGIVE

We are never more God-like than when we forgive! Christ calls His followers to be forgivers. In Matthew 6:12, He taught us to pray in this way:

Matthew 6:12 (NKJV)

12 And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.

Remember this is the prayer of a child of God who already knows God as “Father”. In the Bible, there is what is called “penal” forgiveness, and there is what is called “parental” forgiveness. In view here is parental forgiveness. In salvation, we are forgiven the penalty of sin once and for all. This is the believer's FOREVER position in Christ. It never changes. We are forever forgiven.

Colossians 1:14 (NKJV)

14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

Hebrews 10:14 (NKJV)

14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

Hebrews 10:17 (NKJV)

17 then He adds, “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

So, the POSITION of the believer as forgiven is forever settled, but our WALK with God still needs maintenance. When we mess up in our walk, we still need to get right with our Father. We still need to be forgiven in the sense of “parental fellowship”.

Let me illustrate. I have four children. They are forever my child. They will always be my child. There is zero danger of them being kicked out of the family. However, as children sometimes they would do things wrong, and there would be a “fellowship” problem between father and child. That is the picture here. This is a problem between Father God and His child.

The child has sinned and needs to get right with the Father. God is still their Father. They are still forgiven in the penal sense. But they are not right in their walk. They need parental forgiveness to restore unhindered fellowship. Their salvation is unaffected, but their fellowship is.

Psalm 66:18 (NKJV)

18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.

1 Peter 3:7 (NKJV)

7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

1 John 1:9 (NKJV)

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

This is all about maintenance – being right in our walk with God. The prayer asking God to forgive our debts refers to our “*moral debts*,” which is to say our sins. In the cross reference of Luke 11, it is stated as sins.

Luke 11:4 (NKJV)

4 And forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.”

But before you pray this prayer, think about what it is saying: Jesus is telling us to ask God to forgive us just as we have forgiven others. It assumes that we have forgiven those who sinned against us, and on that basis, we are asking God to forgive us.

It is saying, “*God in the same way I have forgiven others, I am now asking you to forgive me.*” (cf. Mt. 18:21-35). But what if you haven’t forgiven others? Then you are stopped right in your tracks. Don’t expect God to forgive you if you are not willing to forgive others.

“It is impossible for one to be in fellowship with God as long as he harbors ill will in his heart.” – **Stanley Toussaint**

If you refuse to forgive others, then you cannot be forgiven by God, in the sense of being right in your walk. It’s kind of scary to think about how many believers walk around never being really right with God because they are not willing to forgive others.

This prayer is conditional. It asks God to forgive you on the basis that you are willing to forgive others. That deserves some serious contemplation. Often, we want to claim 1 John 1:9, saying we have confessed sin, but what about Matt. 6:12, which requires that we forgive in order to be forgiven.

Forgiven People Are Forgiving People!

“A believer who refuses to be reconciled to a brother is living in a state of sin; his refusal to make things right is itself a sin.” – **Howard Vos**

I have seen believers get in a fight and then miserably carry on in that state until they die! It truly is a pitiful thing to behold. The sin of UNFORGIVENESS is huge!

Looking at it from another angle – the POSITIONAL angle – we should be willing to forgive all because we have been forgiven all in the penal sense.

Ephesians 4:32 (NKJV)

32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

From whatever angle you want to look at it, we as God's people are to be a forgiving people. As those POSITIONALLY forgiven, we should forgive. As those seeking MAINTENANCE forgiveness in our walk, we must forgive.

“The Christian already forgiven judicially should not expect restoration in the family relationship unless he, himself, is forgiving.” - **John Walvoord**