

The Sermon on the Mount

DEVOTIONAL STUDIES FROM THE
MEN'S MORNING FELLOWSHIP

Matthew 6:14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Matthew 6:15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

You really should always read the footnotes in a book.

These two verses are not part of the Disciple's Prayer. They are a footnote to it.

Jesus told us to pray, **Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.** He emphasizes why in these verses. There is a conditional aspect to forgiveness. Your Father forgives you on the condition you forgive others.

Let's explain right away that we are not talking about the forgiveness of your sins for your salvation. Jesus was not saying that if you withhold forgiveness that He will withdraw the forgiveness of your sins and return you to a state of being unsaved.

God is your Father in this prayer and in this sermon. You are a child of His. You are a part of His forever family.

Conditional forgiveness is *not* conditional security. We believe in the eternal security of the genuine believer.

It is your joy, freedom, growth, and enjoyment that are at stake when it comes to forgiving or not forgiving others. It is your fellowship with God that suffers. Jesus was talking about parental forgiveness. If believers are unwilling to forgive those who wrong them, how can

they expect to be in fellowship with their Father who has freely forgiven them for their wrongdoings?

A definition of the key words may be helpful:

1. **Forgive** can mean *to send forth* or *to send away*; or it can mean *to cancel a debt*.
2. **Trespases** means *a fall* or *a false step*. It refers to all manner of wrongdoing and sin.

It might be helpful to understand this from the Jewish perspective. Under the Mosaic Law there was a sin offering and a trespass offering (a.k.a., guilt offering) (Leviticus 6:14-6:7). The trespass offering was for specific known sins, trespases where the person knew what they had done, because of their conscience, in relation to their experience versus what they knew God required.

The Trespass Offering and the Sin Offering have some degree of overlap, where 'sin' might be considered to be our sinful nature and 'trespass' as a sinful deed, a wrongdoing, a trespass.

Sins of negligence, fraud, omission, violations of personal rights, failures to keep promises, and taking an oath to harm or do evil to someone, are some of the examples listed in Leviticus.

It expressed reconciliation and restitution. You had to bring a sacrifice and restore any property taken or damaged and add one-fifth to it.

So here was Jesus telling His audience the true meaning of the trespass offering. It was to be reconciled with others and remain in fellowship with them. The way to do it was not through sacrifice but by asking for and receiving forgiveness.

Jesus fulfills the requirements as our Sacrifice for both the sin and the trespass offerings. Think of those two different Old Testament rituals while I read from First John 1:7 – 2:2.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

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

1 John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

1 John 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.

1 John 2:2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

We're cleansed from all sin. We've been forgiven our sins at salvation. But we still need the forgiveness of our daily sins.

I want to make an application of this that will encourage us to have a more forgiving spirit toward others.

Isaiah 53:10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief. **When You make His soul an offering for sin**, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.

Offering for sin reads *guilt offering*. Jesus would be everyone's once-for-all guilt offering. When someone trespasses against me, the guilt or trespass offering has already been made. And, to a certain extent, I can see myself as being more than compensated by Jesus Christ who gives me all things. In one sense, then, I can forgive even if I'm not asked to forgive.

- being changed to bring change -

The power to do it lies in the fact that your Father forgives you **your** trespasses. It is illustrated most poignantly in the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18). In the parable a king took an account of his servants. One owed him a great debt which he could not ever really repay. In response to his begging the master forgave his servant all the debt.

Then, seeing another servant who owed him a very small amount, the first servant demanded payment. When the second servant begged, the first servant – the unforgiving servant – had him cast into prison.

Hearing about it the king had the unforgiving servant brought before him.

Matthew 18:32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.

Matthew 18:33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?'

Matthew 18:34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

Matthew 18:35 "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

We would interpret the punishment as discipline in this life and the loss of reward at the Bema of Christ.

Human nature is inclined to resent rather than to release, to be demanding rather than to forgive. But we do not live according to the old nature. We have God's new nature. That is why Jesus could tell Peter to forgive seventy times seven in a day for the same offense.

There is a detailed teaching, attributed to Jay Adams, about asking for and extending forgiveness. It's based on Matthew 18 where Jesus gives the steps for overcoming offenses. It can eventually lead to what is commonly called Church Discipline.

It's good stuff as long as you realize that forgiveness is *not* a formula. It's not a feeling, either. It's not cold and calculated; neither is it touchy-feely.

It is, for lack of a better term, a spirit you adopt. **The grace of forgiveness is to care more about a person than what he has done.**

We are to send away from our minds all the wrongdoings of others as they sin against us. Jon Courson: "When people fail, don't rub it in. *Rub it out!*"

If someone sins against you, Jesus has already offered Himself as their guilt/trespass offering. You have already been compensated. It is they who are suffering. They are suffering spiritually by being out of fellowship with God.

It's not wrong to go to the one who has offended you and confront them in love. But it might be better to let go of the offense and let God deal with them.



