

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 5

Forgive us our debts,
as we forgive
our debtors.



THE UNFORGIVING STAY UNFORGIVEN

Scripture Texts: Matthew 6:14-15; Matthew 18:21-35

We must forgive to be forgiven. Can an unrepentant one really forgive? It takes love to forgive. Can an unsaved person who never rejoiced to be free from his own sins feel desire to loose another? Can we in our strength accomplish forgiveness of the quality we desire from God? **They that are in the flesh—unregenerate—cannot please God** in anything (**Romans 8:8**). Repentance toward God opens the door for the love of God to come in. It takes His love to forgive. Christian love forgives even before forgiveness is sought.

MEMORY VERSE: *Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

—*Matthew 6:12*

Jesus' Promise

Matthew 6:14 *If ye forgive . . . If*, so much hangs upon this little word. We all want to be forgiven. Not all want it enough to take the way to forgiveness. But do not all wish their own sins were covered with forgiveness? Jesus promises this blessing to those who give it to others. We pray to be forgiven as we forgive (**verse 12**). Therefore, every time we pray this prayer, if we have not forgiven all those who have done us wrong, we pray for God's damnation to our souls. This is very serious business. Christ's promise is this: **Forgive and you shall be forgiven. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses (Mark 11:26)**. Love and revenge cannot live in the same heart. An unforgiving spirit chokes out all possibility for the expression of love.

Unforgiveness Shuts the Door

Matthew 6:15 *If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive . . .* While our Heavenly Father delights in mercy and longs to forgive us, still it is possible to shut the door against Him so He cannot. How? **If ye forgive not . . .** To flow at all, the virtue of forgiveness must flow two ways—into our hearts from God, out of our hearts to others.

Peter's Question

Matthew 18:21-22 Peter, the outspoken member of the band of disciples, presented this question to Jesus: **Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?** "Against me." Like so many, Peter was deeply conscious of the wrongs done to him by others and apparently quite unconscious of the wrongs he did to them. The Jewish religion taught that three offenses should be forgiven and the fourth punished; so Peter probably felt very generous in forgiving seven times. But Jesus' answer changed Peter's selfish generosity to a selfless seventy times seven. Jesus was not dealing with specific numbers in this answer, but rather, He was stressing the necessity for unlimited forgiveness. It is not the act of forgiveness but the attitude to forgive that Christ requires of us.

A Parable to Illustrate

Matthew 18:23-35 In order to illustrate to His disciples the meaning of forgiveness, He told the parable about a certain king who discovered that a servant **owed him ten thousand talents**. This was a tremendous sum of money—incomprehensible to the people of that day. Likewise, our debt is so great that, by our own means,

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we could never even hope to pay God. Since the servant could not pay his debt, the king commanded that he, along with his wife and children, be sold into slavery. Our sinful ways always involve the innocent.

The servant therefore fell down on his knees, asking for mercy and begging for time to repay the debt. He admitted his transgression, and the king had compassion on him. Not only did he receive what he asked, but the king completely wiped the debt from his books, placing no further obligation upon him to pay.

The parable did not stop here, however. This same servant went out and took a fellow servant **by the throat** and said, **Pay me that thou owest**. He had been forgiven a debt of several million dollars and now, without pity or mercy, he demanded payment of a mere fifteen dollars owed him by his fellow servant.

What a fuss we make about little personal injuries by others, unmindful that they are as nothing compared with our sins against God. The king let it be known that this attitude was considered hateful in the sight of a forgiving God. Our salvation depends upon our forgiveness, and God will never forgive us until we have an attitude of forgiveness toward those who transgress against us. When the king heard about the unmerciful servant, he, in wrath, delivered him into prison **till he should pay all** the debt. God can and will forgive every form of sin, but when He freely forgives a man his debt, and that man turns about and treats his brother without love, the wrath of God is upon that man. We must ever realize what God has pardoned in us. God has abundant love and mercy, but eternal punishment will come to those who do not forgive as they have been forgiven. Forgiveness is God's greatest gift. To stand free from guilt is a man's greatest treasure.

One might ask if we should forgive if we are not asked. Some may never ask. A true Christian love automatically forgives. It forgives even before forgiveness is sought. **While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8)**.

Signs of Unforgiveness

In examining our hearts for lingering unforgiveness, what shall we look for? Resentment. Desire for revenge. Love of gossip. Satisfaction at misfortune befalling one who has wronged us. Lack of concern for a brother who falls into sin. Critical spirit, seeing faults first. Many others can be named.

Is not this the reason for troubles or factions in a congregation? An unforgiving spirit will separate one from another, preventing unity. An unforgiving spirit shuts one off from God's forgiveness—and so from salvation. This hinders the spread of the Gospel, hinders souls from finding God.

Forgiveness does not give us a bad memory, but when one forgives, he never mentions the matter to bring it up ever again. Read **Isaiah 43:25**.

JUST A THOUGHT

"Only the truly forgiven can truly forgive."