Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Pardon of Prayer, Part 1
Scripture: Matthew 6:12, 14-15
Code: 2241

Will you turn in your Bible with me to the sixth chapter of Matthew, Matthew chapter 6? I'm having such a wonderful time in my own life dealing with the Beatitudes or rather with the Lord's Prayer as I did with the Beatitudes. I think you remember back when we covered the Beatitudes how deeply involved we became in them. I'm thrilled to let you know that, as of last Friday, that series in the Beatitudes became a book entitled *Kingdom Living: Here and Now*. And we'll have them for you in a matter of a couple of weeks, and you can have a copy of all of our studies in the Beatitudes in book form. But I have the same kind of joy as I study through the Lord's Prayer or as we've called it, The Disciples' Prayer, just digging as deeply as we can into this mine of treasure that Christ has given us in teaching us how to pray. And again I want to read all of the verses of this majestic prayer in its depth and simplicity so that we'll have a frame of reference as we look particularly at verse 12.

"After this manner, therefore, pray ye, Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen."

Focusing this Lord's day and next for sure and maybe even beyond that, on verse 12, "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." And then a footnote on verse 12 in verse 14, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Those three verses, the statement in the prayer and then the very, very important footnote and the very much misunderstood footnote that our Lord gives in 14 and 15, are going to be the theme of our study in the days ahead. The focus and the concentration of verse 12 is on the subject of sin and its forgiveness. And that is a petition that every soul needs to face as a part of their prayer life.

Surely, if you'll think about it, you will agree with me that the most essential and the most blessed and the most difficult thing that God ever did was provide man with the forgiveness of sin. It is most essential because it keeps us from eternal hell, and gives us joy even in this life. It is most blessed because it introduces us into a fellowship with God that goes on forever and it is most difficult because it cost the Son of God His life, on a cross. But the most essential, the most blessed, and the most difficult thing is the forgiveness of sin. It is the greatest need of the human heart. Sin has a two-fold effect, generally, and that is that it damns men forever. That's its future effect. Its present effect is that it robs men of the fullness of life by bringing to bear upon his conscience an unrelieved and

unrelenting guilt. And so as we face the problem of sin we face the fact that sin brings immediate consequences, guilt and the loss of meaningfulness, peace and joy and life and the future consequence that sin brings eternal damnation.

Sin, then, is unquestionably the major need or the major problem for which here is a need for solution in the life of man. Just thinking about human life where sin is unforgiven, we have to face the fact of what guilt and condemnation in our own conscience does to us. Shakespeare, who claimed to be no theologian, certainly knew at least of the Bible's indication and of the fact of human life that people can become sick in their minds and their bodies over unconfessed and unforgiven sin. I remember as a young boy seeing *Macbeth* and hearing of the struggle and the anguish and the anxiety in the heart of Lady Macbeth over the murder of Duncan. And she took it on herself all kinds, of psychosomatic disorders as a result of this unconfessed murder. And Macbeth called in a physician and said to him these words – or rather the physician said to Macbeth these words, "Not so sick, my lord, as she is troubled with thick coming fancies that keep her from her rest."

In other words, the physician told Macbeth that her pro-blem was in her mind. And Macbeth then asked the doctor these words, a classic statement: "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased? Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow, raise out the written troubles of the brain and with some sweet oblivious antidote cleanse the stuffed bosom of that peril of stuff that weighs upon the heart?" And no physician can do that.

William Sadler said quote: "A clear conscience is a great step toward barricading the mind against neuroticism." John R. W. Stott in his little book, *Confess Your Sins,* quotes the head of a large British hospital as having said and I quote, "I could dismiss half of my patients tomorrow if they assured of forgiveness." Forgiveness is man's deepest need now and in the future, for health and for heaven. Thus it is the first petition related to man's soul here in this prayer.

The first three petitions "Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven," relate to God. The last three petitions relate to men. "Give us this day our daily bread, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," but the first of the last three is for physical sustenance. "Give us this day our daily bread." And while there is only one petition for the physical life, there are two for the spiritual because it is much more important. But the physical is first of all necessary. We cannot live out spiritual principles unless we are alive physically. So, first our physical needs are met in verse 11, and then when we come to the spiritual, the first and most basic request on the part of the inner man is for the forgiveness of sins. That is man's deepest spiritual need. That is where God and man must, first of all, meet. For before God can ever lead us at all let alone lead us not into temptation; before God can deliver us at all from anything we must have a relationship to Him which is possible only when our sins are dealt with.

For God is a holy God as of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look upon iniquity. “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God,” said Isaiah. And there is no way that an absolute holy God can possibly entertain in His presence a relationship with unholy, ungodly sinful men. If we are to have any relationship with God, if there is any spiritual thing to be gained, it begins with a petition for forgiveness. And you will notice that in verse 12, forgive is mentioned twice. In verse 14 forgive is mentioned twice. And in verse 15 forgive is mentioned twice again. Six times we see the thrust and the theme, the forgiveness of sins.

Now, remember as we’ve learned that this prayer is basically focused on God. It is a prayer intent on glorifying God. It begins with God’s paternity, “Our Father who art in heaven.” And then God’s priority, “Hallowed be Thy name.” And then God’s program, “Thy kingdom come.” And then God’s purpose, “Thy will be done.” And then God’s provision, “Give us this day our daily bread.” And now God’s pardon, “Forgive us our debts.” Followed by God’s protection, “Lead us not.” And then God’s preeminence, “For Thine is the kingdom.” It all focuses on God and we come now to the thrust of God’s pardon for our sins.

The very nature of prayer, beloved, now mark it, is that we are acknowledging a total dependence on God. We will have no daily bread without God. We will have no forgiveness of sin without God. We will have no leading and directing in our lives apart from God. Therefore, His is the preeminence, the power and the glory in the kingdom. We’re focusing on God.

And so we come in verse 12 in our prayers, routinely, to speak to God about the matter of the forgiveness of sin. Now, there are four principles I want to give you this morning and four words we’ll be discussing. We’ll just discuss the first two, and next week we’ll follow it up from there. But there are four principles that embody these four words. I want to give you the principles, and then we’ll pull the words out and look at them specifically.

Principle number one. These are the four principles that I see germane to he thrust of this text. Number one, sin makes man guilty and brings judgment. Sin makes man guilty and brings judgment. That’s pretty basic. I think any of us who are Christians or who have been involved in the teaching of the Word at all know that to be true. Sin makes us guilty and brings judgment. That’s really the bottom line, isn’t it? That’s the human dilemma; man is a sinner and that is his problem. Now the Bible says sin is lawlessness, sin is lawlessness. It is breaking God’s law. It is violating God’s standard. The Bible says that in 1 John 3:4, sin is lawlessness. In Romans 3:19 it says, “That we are therefore guilty before God.” We break His laws, we become guilty. And then Romans 6 says, “Because we are guilty, the wages of our sin, or the penalty or the sentence, is death.” So man is a sinner because he is lawless. He breaks God’s laws. In breaking God’s laws, he becomes guilty and the judgment for guilt is death. So, sin makes us guilty and brings judgment. All men across the face of the earth stand in judgment before God for their sin.

Second principle, very simple, but I want you to understand it; forgiveness is offered by God on the ground of Christ's death. Forgiveness is offered by God on the ground of Christ's death. That's the second simple principle that you have to understand to understand this passage. God is a holy God and God sees a sinful man, sinful woman, a sinful society, but God is also a merciful, loving and forgiving God, so forgiveness is offered to sinful man. Though he is guilty and stands in judgment, God is a forgiving God. The Bible says He will remember our sin no more. He will pass by our iniquities. He will bury them in the depths of the sea. He will remove them as far as the east is from the west. All throughout the prophets and the apostles of the Scriptures there is this unceasing promise that God is a God of forgiveness. He wants to forgive us our sins.

Now He can't just do that. He has to take the penalty for our sins and bring it to its fullness. Why? Because a just and a righteous and a holy God cannot forgive sin unless sin's penalty is paid, you see? So Christ took our place. Forgiveness then is offered by God on the ground of Christ's death.

A third principle, confession of sin is necessary to receive that forgiveness from God. Confession of sin is necessary to receive that forgiveness from God. The forgiveness is available. The penalty has been paid for. The propitiation or the covering has been made. The satisfaction has been accomplished. It is only a matter of receiving the gift, and basic to that reception is a confession of sin. As Paul puts it in Acts 20, "Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ results in salvation." There must then be confession of sin. I John 1:9 in effect says, the ones who are confessing their sins, they are the ones giving evidence that they are being forgiven. In other words, confession of sin is a manifestation necessary for forgiveness. It is part and parcel of that.

When you come to God, you come as a sinner. No man ever receives salvation who isn't repentant for sin. In the beatitudes our Lord says, if you want to enter My kingdom you enter My kingdom like this: first of all, you acknowledge that you are a beggar in your spirit. You are abject and destitute and no resources are available to you and in the midst of your beggarly sinfulness with your vile robes of wretchedness, you cry out. It says, "mourning over your sin" meek before a holy God and hunger and thirst for righteousness, plead for His mercy and on that basis God received you.

In Luke 18 it tells us that the Pharisee went into the temple, and said, "I thank thee that I am not as other men, even as this publican over here, tax collector, but that I fast twice a week and give tithes of all that I possess, et cetera, et cetera." And over in the corner was the tax collector, and he wouldn't so much as lift up his eyes to heaven but he smote upon his breast, and he cried out, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" And Jesus said, "That man went home justified rather than the other." Why? Because one refused to acknowledge his sinfulness and the other acknowledged it. Basic then to receive available forgiveness is the confession of sin, and God is eager and anxious to forgive the one who confesses. If we confess, He's faithful and still righteous to keep on cleansing us from all sin.

There's a fourth principle, and this is kind of the knockout punch in this passage, and the one that confuses most people. Fourthly, forgiving one another is an essential part of receiving forgiveness for ourselves. Forgiving one another is an essential part of receiving forgiveness for ourselves. Now very often when people read the verses, particularly verse 14 and 15. We're only going to get forgiven if we forgive. They get confused because it looks like forgiveness from God requires that we forgive somebody else, and they assume then that you've got to start forgiving people before you can get saved. And a lot of people say, "Well, we don't understand. You mean I'm never going to have forgiveness from God until I forgive somebody else? How can I forgive somebody else if I'm not even a Christian?" How can I do a righteous act before I have a righteous nature is the question. But that question presupposes the misunderstanding of the whole concept in verses 14 and 15. Stay with us this morning and we'll start to build toward solving that.

Now, I gave you four principles, didn't I? And I hope you remembered them. Principle number one, sin makes men guilty and brings judgment. Number two, forgiveness is offered by God on the ground of Christ's death. Number three, confessing sin is necessary to receive the available forgiveness from God. And number four, forgiving one another is essential if we are to be forgiven.

Now let's take four words out of those four principles. The first one is sin makes us guilty. Then forgiveness is offered by God. Then confession is necessary, and forgiving one another is essential. I want to talk then today and next time and maybe even the time after that about sin, forgiveness, confession, and forgiving because those four words, if fully understood, will literally open up the meaning of this often times confusing portion.

Let's begin with the first word: sin. "And forgive us our debts." Verse 15 uses the word trespass and trespasses. Now listen, both of those words describe sin. S in is the problem. Alright, you probably have that on your outline. Sin is the problem. The problem of every man. Man is sinful. Let me show you Romans chapter 3 for a moment, and this is very basic but very necessary and I'm going to build on this, I think, some things perhaps you have not seen before. Romans chapter 3 and verse 10, "As it is written there is none righteous, no not one." And the Lord put the last part there because as sure as you're born if it had said "There is none righteous," somebody would have said "Comma, except me." And so the Lord says there is none righteous, no, not even you. Not one. Verse 12, "They are all gone out of the way." That is, they have all departed from the way of righteousness. "They are together become unprofitable," and the Greek word means to go sour like bad milk. "There is none that doeth good, no not you." Nobody.

Verse 19, "Now we know that whatever things he law saith, it saith to them under the law that every mouth may be stopped." In other words, there's no defense. You have nothing to say to justify yourself. "And all the world may become guilty before God." Verse 23, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Chapter 4 goes on to say, "In Adam all have died, and sin has passed upon

them all."

The point is this, people, everybody is confirmed in sin, everybody. Sin disturbs every relationship in the human real Sin stirs up cosmic chaos. Sin waits to attack every baby born into the world. David said, "In sin did my mother conceive me." And the Bible tells us that iniquity begins even from the moment when one is born. Sin is the monarch of the world that rules the heart of every man. Sin is the first lord of the soul. Sin's virus has contaminated every living being. Sin is the degenerative power in the human stream that makes man susceptible to disease and illness and death and hell. Sin is the culprit in every broken marriage, every disrupted home, every shattered friendship, every argument, every pain, every sorrow, every anguish and every death. Sin, the common denominator.

No wonder Scripture in Joshua 7:13 says, "Sin is that accursed thing." It is compared to the venom of snakes. It is compared to the stench of death. And tragically, from the viewpoint of human resources, absolutely nothing can be done about it. Jeremiah said, "Can the Ethiopian change his color? Can the leopard change his spots? You have just about as much a chance to do good who are accustomed to doing evil." It's hopeless. Sin dominates the mind. Romans 1:21, "Men have a reprobate mind, a mind given over to evil and lust." Sin dominates the will. Jeremiah 44, "Men will to do evil because their will is controlled by sin." Sin dominates the emotions and the affections. John 3, "They love darkness rather than light." The mind, the will, the affections, emotions, all dominated by sin.

Sin brings men under the control of Satan. In Ephesians chapter 2 it says, "Men are guided by the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience." Sin brings people under divine wrath, they become children of wrath, says Ephesians 2:3. Bullseyes for the guns of God's judgment. Sin makes man's life utterly miserable. Job says in chapter 5, verse 7; "Man is born unto trouble like the sparks fly upward." Isaiah 54:21 says, "There is no peace to the wicked." Romans 8:20 says, "The creature is subject to emptiness."

So man's whole life is color stained with sin, and the fifty million or so that die every year face the ultimate consequence of sin. So man has a deep, deep problem. Sin is his problem! And it's a deeper problem than his need for bread or anything else, and so says our Lord when you pray you must pray relating your petition to your sinfulness. It must be brought before God for it is your deepest need. It must be dealt with. You see? And so as we pray in our prayers there must be this element of a recognition of our sinfulness. That's what He is saying.

Now, you'll notice in verse 12 the word debt. And you'll notice in verse 14 and 15 trespasses or trespass. Now let me show you something, there are five words in the New Testament for sin. A little word study, I'm going to run it by pretty fast so hang on to your seat. First word is *harmartia*; don't worry about writing it down. For those of you who are Greek scholars you understand that. *Harmartia* , that word is used probably more than any other in the New Testament for sin, and it means to miss the mark. It's an archer's word. You shoot the arrow and miss the target, and generally the idea is

that you miss because your arrow falls short. “For all have sinned and fall short.” All are guilty of *harmartia* and fall short. No matter how far you try to shoot it, it never quite gets there. You know, some people’s arrows go further than others, but nobody gets there. It’s kind of like jumping to Catalina. You know, we could have a thousand people line up and everybody take one big jump off the Santa Monica beach to Catalina. People would be at all different levels, but nobody would land at Catalina.

So there are differences on how well we approach the problem but everybody’s arrows fall short. We miss the mark, because what is the mark? Matthew 5:48. Our Lord said it earlier in our sermon here, the Sermon on the Mount. He said, “Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” And when you’re like God, you hit the mark, and when you’re not, you don’t. Welcome to the fellowship of those who miss the mark. We miss the mark. That’s the first word for sin.

Second word is *parabasis*. It basically means, to step across a line. God draws a line and the line is between right and wrong. When you sin, you step across the line. It’s kind of like when you go somewhere and the little sign says “Keep off the grass” there’s something in you that just wants to stick your foot over and go like that. We just, there’s something in our nature that reacts to that. Sin then is stepping across the line, which is drawn between right and wrong. It is doing what is a forbidden thing in thought, in word, or in act.

Thirdly there is the word *anomia* based on the word *nomos* which is the word for law in the Greek. It is the idea of lawlessness, like I mentioned earlier. This is a flagrant breaking of God’s law, a rebellion against God. And you’ll notice a progression in these words. *Harmartia*, the word, which has to do with missing the mark, speaks more of our basic incapacity, our nature. We just can’t hit it. We just fall short. It speaks of the incapacity of our nature.

The second word, *parabasis*, is kind of the idea that we just kind of step across the line. You know, we just can’t restrain ourselves from going into the forbidden area. And that’s a little more flagrant than *harmartia* seems to be, which is just sort of our incapacity, our impotence, our helplessness to hit the mark. *Parabasis* is a little more self-directed, a little more planned and premeditated. But when you come to *anomia* that is open, flagrant rebellion against God. So you see a little progression in these terms.

This is the man who wants to kick against the traces. This is the man who doesn’t want God making any claim against his life. He wants to go out and do what he wants. I always think about the old soldier in Kipling’s *Mandalay*, who said, “Ship me somewhere east of Suez where the best is like the worst, where there ain’t no Ten Commandments and a man can raise a thirst.” I mean he didn’t want anything to do with God’s standards, and he rebelled violently and in a reaction.

And so you see an increasing severity in those terms, although all sin could be classified with all those terms. But we come then to the two words used here. First is verse 14 and 15, the word trespass, *paraptma*. It means to slip or fall, and again it's kind of like *harmartia*. It seems to sort of emphasize our incapacity. We just sort of slip. I mean we fall. In Galatians 6:1, "If a brother be overtaken in a fault, restore him in love." You just kind of can't help it. I mean, sooner or later you're going to flop over into some sin. Sin is being swept away. And the idea of *paraptma* is the passion of the moment, or the lust of the moment, or the loss of self-control in the moment where you're just swept away. That's *paraptma*. That's another word for sin. It's not so flagrant maybe as *parabasis* or *anomia*.

But then finally we come to the word in verse 12. That's the word debt, *opheilma*, *opheilma.* You know, that's a very, very interesting word. It's only used here, and I think in Romans 4, the only two times it's ever used as a noun. Its- verb form is used many times. It's a word that is not that familiar to us in terms of sin. But I'll tell you something very interesting; its verb form is 30 times used, 25 in a moral sense, and it means to owe a debt. Five times in the New Testament it's used of a money debt; 25 times it's used of a moral debt. The idea is that sin is a debt. When you sin, you owe to God a consequence for your sin. You owe that debt. You have violated His holiness, and you owe Him for that. Kind of like the idea, you tell your kids, "You do that, and you'll get one whack. You do it again, you'll get two whacks." And they keep doing it and doing it and they've stacked up a few whacks, and so they have a debt to be paid.

In a sense that's what God is saying and that sin becomes a debt. When you violate God's holiness, the record is kept of your debt. And by the way at the end of the age, it tells us in Revelation, the great White Throne Judgment, God will judge the ungodly out of the books. Have you read that? What books? The books that are all the record of the debt that they owe that is unpaid, and they are sentenced to an eternal hell to pay that debt.

You see? Sin is a debt. You might be interested to know that among the rabbis and the Jews of Matthew's day, the most common word used for sin was the word *koba* which is an Aramaic word, and they spoke Aramaic in their common day language; not the Greek which this is written, and so *koba* was the most common Jewish term for sin. And *koba* means a debt because to a Jew the primary responsibility in life was to obey God, and when you disobeyed God you owed Him a debt for your disobedience. And so the Jew thought in terms of that. Now, when you go to Luke and you read about the disciple's prayer, Luke doesn't say, "forgive us our debts." He says, "Forgive us our trespasses or our sins," because he speaks in a maybe more classical manner. But, here, Matthew, with his Jewish orientation, zeros in on this concept of debt because he knows his Jewish audience will really pick up on that. We owe a debt. Sin, then, is a debt to God. It's all of the things we've said, then. All five words summed up is what really classifies and categorizes sin.

Arthur Pink says, “As it is contrary to the holiness of God, sin is a defilement, a dishonor, and a reproach to us. As it is a violation of His law, it is a crime; and as to the guilt which we contact thereby it is a debt. As creatures, we owe a debt of obedience unto our maker and governor. And through failure to render the same on account of our rank disobedience, we have incurred a debt of punishment, and it is for this that we implore a divine pardon.” In other words, we owe such a massive debt to God because of our unrelenting sin that we could never pay that debt. Do you know that? Never pay that debt. Like the unfaithful servant, who owed so much it never could be paid in his whole lifetime, we can’t pay the debt. We can’t pay it, and that is precisely our problem. We are sinners who owe a debt that is so monstrous, it’s inconceivable that we could pay it. Never done. And if ever, beloved, you ought to come to God, you will come to God on the terms of recognition of that debt. That’s right.

Even Peter said, “Depart from me for I am a sinful man, 0 Lord.” Even Paul said, “I am the chief of sinners.” Listen, Jesus taught all men everywhere to pray this prayer, “Forgive us our debts,” and in so doing He laid out the universality of the problem of sin. If all men are to pray it, then all men are to admit it’s their problem. And that’s why the Holy Spirit came into the world in John 16 to convict the world of sin because we’re sinners. Any man who honestly faces the reality of his character cannot be other than conscience of his debt to God and his need to be forgiven. We’re sinners.

That leads us to the second word: forgiveness. If sin is the problem, forgiveness is the provision. Aren’t you glad for that? Forgiveness is the provision. What does it say in verse 12? “Forgive us our debts,” forgive us. And you notice again the collective nature of the prayer, the “us” rather than the “me” encompassing all other believers. There’s a sense of community here. We’re all in the same boat, folks. Forgiveness. Oh, what a marvelous reality! But do you really understand what forgiveness is?

Now this is the part we’ve been kind of building up to. What is forgiveness? You know what it is? What is it for God to forgive you? Remember our second principle, forgiveness is available on the ground of what? Christ’s death. Well, let’s talk about what forgiveness is. Basically, forgiveness, I’ll give you as simplest as I can from a couple of angles, forgiveness is God passing by our sin. It is God wiping our sin off the record. It is God setting us free from punishment and guilt. It is essentially bound up in what Micah 7:18 and 19 says “Who is a God like Thee who pardons iniquity? And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He doesn’t retain His anger forever. He delights in unchanging love. Yet He will again have compassion on us. He will tread our iniquities underfoot. Yes, Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” Isn’t that great? The Old Testament says “He remembers our sins no more.” He passes by our sins.

Let me sum it up in four simple statements. Forgiveness is taking away our sin, covering our sin, blotting out our sin and forgetting our sin. Taking away our sin. Why? Isaiah 53:6, “He has taken the iniquity of us all and laid it on Him.” Right? He’s taken away our sin, and then it means He’s covered

our sin. Psalm 85:2, “Thou hast covered all their sin.” And He blotted out our sin, Isaiah 43:25. I love this verse. “I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions.” And then He forgets our sins. He remembers no more. God literally eliminates our sin.

People, do you understand this? You know, if you ever get to the place in your Christian life where this becomes common place stuff, and you have lost that in inestimable joy of understanding forgiveness, then you’ve hit kind of a dry place in your life. Oh how thankful we should be for such forgiveness. And, listen, it’s only possible because of Christ. God couldn’t just pass by your sin unless He placed the punishment for it on someone else, and that is exactly why Christ Jesus died.

Now, there are two kinds of forgiveness. Now watch this, this is really interesting. Two kinds, number one is judicial forgiveness. Number two is – let’s call it parental forgiveness; judicial and parental. Now let’s start with the first one. Judicial forgiveness. And I think this is all we’ll talk about this morning, just the first. Judicial forgiveness. What is that? It views God as a judge. God looks down and says, “You’re guilt. You’ve broken the law. You’re under judgment, condemnation, there’s got to be punishment.” But then that same judge says, “On the basis of Christ’s death, He bore your punishment; He took your guilt; He paid for your sin; the price is accomplished. I declare you to be forgiven.” That is a judicial act. Full, complete, positional – I like to use that word because it relates to things we’ve studied in the past – positional forgiveness granted by God as the moral Judge of the universe. And by that act of judicial forgiveness, listen to this, all your sins: past, present, future, committed, being committed, and uncommitted are totally, completely and forever forgiven, and you are justified from all things forever.

You say, “Wow! When does that happen?” It happens the moment you invite Jesus Christ into your life, the moment you are redeemed. The moment you place your faith in Christ, your sin is put on Him. His righteousness is put on you, and God judicially declares you to be justified. That’s Romans 3. Declared righteous. Positionally and forever, all sin covered, passed over, blotted out and forgotten. Oh, what a thought! Isn’t that great?

And He just keeps on doing it. This is because of Christ, beloved. This is what He did on the cross! In Matthew 26:28, He said as beheld the cup, “This is My blood of the New Testament which is for the forgiveness of sins.” You see? In Ephesians 1:7, Paul said, “In Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” In I John 2:12, “I write unto you little children because your sins are forgiven for His name sake.” Ephesians 4:32, “Even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you.”

In other words, because Christ took all our sins and paid the penalty, when we believe in Christ and accept His sacrifice, God appropriates it on our behalf. Judicially, we are declared righteous and just forever and forgiven for sins past, present, future. You say, “Is that just New Testament?” Now watch this. I don’t believe that; I believe that is Old Testament too. Now some people think that in the Old Testament you were saved until you sinned the next time, and then when you made another sacrifice

you were saved again. I don't think so. I think you were saved in the Old Testament just like people are in the New Testament by believing God, by submitting yourself to God. And I think redemption in the Old Testament was just as momentary and just as instantaneous and just as exact as in the New.

For example, you take Abraham in James 2:23, and it says, "Abraham believed God." In other words, Abraham came to a point in his life when he had faith in God, and he exercised that faith toward God, and believed all that God had revealed to that time, and accepted God as his Lord and his Savior. And at that point, though he never saw the cross or perceived all that Christ would be, he believed God. And James 2:23 says that, "At that moment it was imputed unto him for righteousness and from then on he was called a friend - " of whom? " - of God." He was saved in a moment.

In Romans chapter 4 again it says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." "And to him that believeth on Him that justifieth, the ungodly his faith is counted for righteousness." He believed, and it was counted to him for righteousness, and from then on it says in that same chapter, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." From the moment that Abraham believed, from then on throughout his life, God never imputed sin to him again because his sins were placed on Christ just as much as yours are.

We're post-Christ. He was pre-Christ, but all the sins of all the saints of all those ages, at the moment they believed were put on Christ. Christ is the apex of history. Whether you lived on the front side or the back side, He still bore their sins. And by an act of faith at that point, Christ's redemption, the value of Christ's redemption was applied to them. Psalm 103:3 says, that God is the one who, "forgives all our iniquities and heals all our diseases."

I believe they knew judicial redemption in the Old Testament, and I believe their sins were nailed to the cross just as much as ours when they believed God. Listen to this, Colossians 2:13. Oh it's a fabulous, fabulous illustration. It's the picture that God has kept these books I told you about. And all through our lives He writes down the record of our sins, and the debt gets worse and worse and worse and worse and worse and worse. And there is no capacity in our lives to pay the debt at all, and all of this debt is on the sheet. Then all of a sudden Christ goes to the cross, and you read in Colossians 2:13, "And you being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh." That's you, dead. You couldn't do anything about your sins. You were hopeless. "You have been made alive with Him." Now watch, "Having forgiven you all trespasses - " and then this fabulous imagery, " - blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against you - " listen " - and nailing it to His cross, He took it out of the way."

You know, when they crucified a criminal they crucified him with at the top of the cross, the record of his crimes, nailed there for the world to see why he was being crucified. The apostle Paul is saying this, a great truth; when Jesus died on the cross, God pulled all the pages out of the books that

belonged to all who would believe throughout history, stacked them all together, nailed them to the cross, as if they were the crimes of Jesus. And when Jesus died, He paid the penalty for every crime that was nailed to His cross, and God blotted them out. You see?

That's judicial forgiveness. Oh, to know that we are ultimately and forever forgiven in Christ is tremendous joy, isn't it? Richard III, Shakespeare, he says, "My conscience has a thousand several tongues and every tongue its several tale and every tale condemns me." If you're a Christian, you don't have to say that, do you? You can say with Paul in Romans 8, "Who is he that condemneth?" Where is he? Who condemns me? Shall God the justified – in other words, if God is the highest court in the universe, and He declares me just, who's going to condemn me? Nobody. "Therefore, nothing shall separate me from the love of Christ." Nothing at all.

I want to close by showing you one other text. Hebrews 10. One of my favorite passages. I hope it's one of yours. In Hebrews 10, the writer is comparing the sacrificial system of Israel with the sacrifice of Christ, and I want you to notice verse 10 of Hebrews 10. He says, "We are sanctified - " fourth word there. "We are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Stop right there a minute. Sanctified means to be made pure, be made pure, made holy, set apart, separated. We are made holy. We are set apart by the one sacrifice of Christ. Oh, listen, people. You don't have to repeat it. When He died and we believed, His sacrifice was sufficient. He said on the cross, *tetelestai,* "It is finished."

We are sanctified, set apart from sin unto God, which is a perfect participle in the Greek with a finite verb. And it is the strongest possible way the Greek language knows to show the permanent, continuous, state of salvation that issues from one great event. And so Christ dies on the cross, and the moment we believe, that is imputed to us. And there is a continuous forgiveness based on that one offering.

In contrast to that in verse 11 the priests of the Old Testament were daily ministering, and they were standing. See the word standeth? Standing and offering the same sacrifices again and again and again. Always standing up because the job was never done. Verse 12, "But this man after He offered one sacrifice for sin forever, sat down." Why? It was over. Priests may be standing, walking around doing it again and again, but Christ did it once and sat down. It can't be repeated, it doesn't need to be. Why? Verse 14, "For by one offering He hath perfected forever and ever them that are sanctified." And if Jesus says in Matthew 5:48, "Be ye perfect" and Christ goes to the cross and perfects us, then Christ is the solution to the problem. Right? We're to be perfect, and He perfects us in His one offering. That, beloved, is judicial forgiveness and the result of it is in verse 17. "Their sins and iniquities will I - " what? " - remember no more." Oh, what a great thought. Listen, beloved, all your sins are forgiven because of Christ if you believe. That is judicial positional forgiveness.

Now, go back to Matthew 6, and I'm going to close by introducing one thought. It says, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," and verse 14 says, "And if you forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will forgive you; and if you forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." And all of a sudden we say, wait a minute. If all my sins are already all forgive in Christ, if all my sins were dealt with in the cross of Christ, why do I need to ask forgiveness? And why won't I get it unless I give it to somebody else? That is the question that has confused a lots of people.

Some people say, "Well, you see, this is a prayer for an unbeliever." No, no, it's not a prayer for an unbeliever because an unbeliever does not begin his prayer, "Our Father" does he? This is a believer's prayer. A disciples' prayer. You're already a Christian before you get to verse 12, folks. You say, "Well, if I'm already a Christian and all my sins are forgiven, what am I doing saying 'Forgive us our debts', and what is God doing saying, 'And if you don't forgive somebody else, I'm not going to forgive you?'" If you want to know the answer to that, be here next week. And if you don't want to know the answer to that, God have mercy on your sin-sick shriveled up soul. Because that's one of the greatest truths in all the Bible. And the basis of it is this, you must understand – I'll give you a hint now – you must understand the difference between judicial forgiveness and parental forgiveness. One deals with your position before God forever; the other deals with the joy of your fellowship day by day. And we'll see that, Lord willing, next week. Let's pray.

It's good to be together again, Father, and share Your Word. We thank You for its richness. Oh, thank You for Your forgiveness. For the provision You've made for every person here. While your heads are bowed and your eyes are closed for just a moment, may I say this? Some of you don't know Christ, and so you've never know His forgiveness. It's available to you today. In your heart right now all you need do is open up and say, "Christ, come in and forgive my sin. I know I'm a sinner. I want Your cleansing. I know You died for me. I know You paid the penalty."

That simple prayer will result in judicial forgiveness applied to you and forever and ever you'll be in God's family, and you'll enjoy the fullness of His eternal heaven. And He'll never take back His gift. Oh, I hope you won't go away without that forgiveness.

Father, dismiss us with Your blessing. Thank You for Your forgiveness. Bring us back tonight for a great and glorious evening together, and we'll give You praise in Christ's name, and everyone said, Amen. God bless you.

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