

Forgive as We Forgive

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- [0 : 0 0] I want to share with you guys a little story about my friend David, King David, to be specific. And yeah, this is the record that he gave me to kind of tell his story, okay?
- So this is a challenging, powerful story, so I'm just going to read it with you guys. So in the spring of the year, when kings normally go out to war, David sent Joab and the Israelite army to fight the Ammonites.
- However, David stayed behind in Jerusalem. Then late one afternoon after his midday rest, David got out of bed and was walking on the roof of his palace.
- And as he looked over the city, he noticed a woman of unusual beauty taking a bath. And he sent someone to find out who she was, and he was told, She is Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.
- Then David sent messengers to get her. And when she came to David's palace, he slept with her. And then she returned home.
- [1 : 2 1] Later, when Bathsheba discovered that she was pregnant, she sent David a message saying, I'm pregnant. And I think in the story now, you can maybe imagine, it's not in the official record of David, but maybe just that sense of guilt and shame.
- Because as the king of Israel, he knew very well what God's design and God's heart and how God thought about adultery. And you can maybe just imagine if you were in his shoes, I know it might be hard to imagine yourself in the shoes of a king, but just this sense of, oh my goodness, what have I done?
- How did this happen? So the story continues. David was a smart man, so I think, so he, my friend, probably just kind of survival mode, instinct, figuring things out, kind of kicked in.
- And it says this, Then David sent word to Joab, the commander that he had sent out to fight the Ammonites. He sent word to Joab saying, Send me, Uriah the Hittite.
- So Joab sent him to David. And when Uriah arrived, David asked him how Joab and the army were getting along, how the war was progressing, you know, the good pleasantries like that.
- [2 : 4 5] Then he told Uriah, go on home and relax. David even sent a gift to Uriah after he had left the palace.
- So you can imagine, you can probably guess, you know, why he wanted to send Uriah home, right? Because if Uriah went home, you know, obviously, you know, had a good night with his wife, everything would be patched up.
- Everything would look fine on the outside, right? The problem was this, Uriah didn't go home. He slept that night at the palace entrance with the king's palace guard.
- And when David heard that Uriah had not gone home, he summoned him and asked, What's the matter? Why didn't you go last night after being away for so long?
- And Uriah replied, Okay, so David responded, Well, stay here today and tomorrow you may return to the army.

- [4 : 03] So you can probably imagine David's trying to think, What can I do to make this plan kind of work out? So the next day, David invited him to dinner and got him drunk.
- But even then, he couldn't get Uriah to go home to his wife. And again, Uriah slept at the palace entrance with the king's palace guard.
- So if you put yourself in David's shoes now, what do you do next? You can just probably imagine that sort of anxiety as he's, you know, maybe laying in bed and thinking, What am I going to do?
- How do I fix this? How do I cover this up? So the next morning, David wrote a letter to Joab and gave it to Uriah to deliver.
- So Uriah's going to deliver this letter to Joab, his commander. And the letter instructed Joab, Station Uriah on the front lines where the battle is fiercest.
- [5 : 08] Then pull back so that he will be killed. So Joab obediently assigned Uriah to a spot close to the city wall where he knew the enemy's strongest men would be fighting.
- And when the enemy soldiers came out of the city to fight, Uriah the Hittite was killed along with several other Israelite soldiers. And if you've never heard this story before, I trust, I mean, some of you I know, you've heard that.
- You've never heard it before. You know, this is a good reminder for us. The main character is King David. And he wasn't just any king.
- You might kind of look at that story and say, Yeah, I know, you know, kings are messed up and they do crazy things all the time. But King David was one of the godliest and greatest kings ever to lead the people of ancient Israel.
- The Bible even describes him as a man after God's own heart. And that's quite the description. If anyone ever calls you a man or woman after God's own heart, Well, you can really kind of reflect on that and think if that's true or not.
- [6 : 27] So here, David, the greatest, godliest king of Israel, described as the man of God's own heart, commits this treacherous thing. And although he was guilty of committing adultery and trying really hard to cover it up, and ultimately getting Uriah killed, the episode doesn't end there.
- Because when you read on in the story, you find that God sends the prophet Nathan to confront David about everything. And David confesses.
- He says this, I have sinned against the Lord. I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan tells David that his sin will have consequences.
- Of course, his sins will have consequences. But David is forgiven, and he will not die. And so church, that's what makes David a man after God's own heart.
- Not that he was perfect, but when he was faced with that reality, when he was actually convicted and confronted with sin, he confessed genuinely, and he repented.
- [7 : 41] And today we're going through a series on the Lord's Prayer. Last week we talked about, God, your kingdom come. Today we're going to look at when Jesus teaches us to pray, our heavenly Father, forgive us our debts.
- I'll just kind of put that on the screen right now. Our Father in heaven, forgive our debts. And in this time, just in the next 20 minutes or so, I want to simply show us what Jesus meant by that when he said, forgive us our debts.
- And how do we actually put that into practice? And this story of David that I just kind of narrated for you is really helpful for us to understand debt, this nature of debt and forgiveness.
- Because the concept of debt is normally economic, right? When we think about money we owe to others, we will describe that as a debt to them.

But when we think of debt at a broader level, and we kind of see how it applies to so much more than money. You know, when we look at King David, King David, the godliest, greatest king of Israel, God gives him everything so that he can represent God as the king of Israel and lead his people.

[9 : 05] But when he does these terrible things with what God has given him, with what he's received, using the idea of debt, we can say that David is now indebted to God because he failed so miserably to be the king that he was supposed to be.

In the Bible, that's what God calls sin. So when we look at prayer and forgiveness today, I mean, if you haven't felt it already, my hope is that we realize that this should be a heavy topic.

It is a heavy topic. When we look at David's life, you know, sin and spiritual debt touch every aspect of our lives. Everything.

So we need to face it head on. And we need to look at what it means for us to pray regularly about forgiveness and all the issues that come with it. So if we're going to take the Lord's Prayer to heart, we, the first thing we must do is we've got to recognize just the magnitude of debt.

It's not a small thing, the magnitude of it. And today, whether you're a Christian or not, you might look at David and say, well, you know, that's crazy, you know, what he did.

[10 : 25] And that's very messed up. I've never done anything like that. I mean, I've lived a pretty good life overall. And even those of us who've learned about the seriousness of sin and how God's standards are perfect, I think we can kind of drift back to thinking that we're not all that bad.

You might not say that sort of intentionally and consciously in your head, but you might kind of just default back to thinking, oh, you know, maybe I was pretty bad at one point, but now I've recovered. Now I've gained my footing again.

Now I'm on the way to righteousness. And I'm doing well. Now I remember back in university, way back when, when I was really far from God.

I didn't really have any interest in following him. I would probably say that was kind of one of the low points in my life. Just completely engrossed with enjoying myself and, you know, spent a whole year just partying hard and working hard and just kind of doing my thing.

I just remember making, I remember waking up one morning after about a whole year and just thinking, this can't be who I am. This can't be all that I am.

[11 : 42] There has to be more to this. And it was then that I really thought long and hard about God's purpose for creating me and how I might fulfill that purpose.

And I came to the realization that some of you may have also come to realize that God created us to worship him with our entire lives so that every last part of our lives would reflect his glory and his goodness.

And I definitely wasn't doing that in that year of partying hard and working hard. I mean, sure, I wasn't covering up adultery and I wasn't trying to get my classmates killed and my roommates killed.

Sure, I wasn't doing that. But when I started reading the Gospels, when I started reading what Jesus said about anger and lust, that ultimately, to God, even the traces of anger and lust in my heart were to him the same ultimately as murder and adultery.

You know, anger becoming murder and lust becoming adultery. These, I realized something profound that sin and death are not just about actions.

[13 : 11] Right? They're about the smallest of our motives, the smallest of our intentions, the smallest of our desires from the depths of our hearts.

And every person in this room, including myself, has mixed motives. Every person is capable of the darkest and most evil things when it's only happening in our minds.

Right? And I would like to think that given a particular environment or a particular circumstance or a particular upbringing, I would easily be capable of turning those desires and letting them manifest in actions.

You just need the right environment. Right? Pure motives count. And if you think about it, we as humans, we certainly care about humans.

I mean, human motives, right? I mean, just think about it honestly. If you looked at your spouse or your child or your parents and they only acted like they loved you, how would you feel?

[14 : 29] You know, they acted, they're the best Oscar award winning actor and they acted great like they loved you day after day after day. Oscar winning performances, but inside there was no real desire or at least the motives, the intentions were really mixed.

How would you feel about that? And if you care about those motives, how much more do your motives matter when it comes to the perfect God who created you?

How much more would that matter? So the key to this is realizing that debt is a big deal. It's a serious thing when it's to God, the perfect God.

When you owe a debt to God, that debt is massive. Why? Because God is the perfect embodiment of everything that is good. Perfect motives, perfect actions.

And so when he has called us to be like that in our lives and we fail to live up to that calling, the debt is massive. So the reality is today, you know, if any of us think that we are somehow good enough to pay that debt, I think we're just delusional.

[15 : 45] You know, those mixed motives in my heart mean that I can never reflect God's glory the way I was intended to. Just going back to the debt idea, right?

If you are permanently bankrupt, if you are permanently insolvent, how on earth can you pay your debts? Right?

You have nothing, nothing to pay back. And although that was a rhetorical question, you may have guessed the answer is Jesus Christ.

Since we cannot possibly live that perfect life, God lived it through Jesus. He lived that perfect life through Jesus Christ. And since the only way for us to pay the debt is through death and separation from God, Jesus was crucified and separated from God on our behalf.

So this is the first step for us to remember. We need to put our faith in Jesus Christ and what he did for us.

[16 : 53] We need to do that every day. And if you're in this room today and you've never put your faith in Christ before, today is as good a day as any, I think, to do that.

Because Christ is the only way that a bankrupt, insolvent people can pay back that debt to Jesus.

Now you might be sitting in your chair and thinking, well I know that, I've heard that before. And the truth is, I have, because everything I just shared with you, I realized all of that 13 years ago when I woke up that morning and thought to myself, my life is so stupid.

All this days and days of partying and studying hard, what's the point? I'm just going to do more tests and work for the next job and work for the next promotion and work and work and work until the day I die.

And it was just an endless search for the next thing. And I just woke up and I started thinking, wow, this is really meaningless and really hopeless.

[18 : 03] I realized all of that that day 13 years ago. And as I learned how to follow Jesus, as I learned in the Gospels what it looked like to actually find true purpose and meaning in my life and thinking about how God designed me, as God worked in my life, yes, I did grow, I did mature, I realized all those things that I just described to you.

But then something happened. As I grew, as I mature, I started to forget the depths of my sin. I started to kind of think, oh, maybe I'm good enough now because I started to do a lot of the right things.

I had sort of built this reputation of being a mature person. I think someone might even have dared to call me or pray that I was a man after God's own heart.

Maybe just once. And I think I had achieved the status of being a mature or good Christian, whatever that means.

and I felt more happy about what I had done. I might not have consciously thought that, but I started to feel more happy about what I had done than what Jesus had done on the cross.

[19 : 28] And Jesus became a nice name for my identity, Christ follower, Christian, a church leader, a fellowship leader. It became a nice name, a nice title for my identity, but Jesus actually wasn't the one I depended on 100% to pay that debt that I needed to pay.

And now kind of looking back in that journey, man, how arrogant and prideful was I to think that somehow, you know, through my own talents and effort and whatever other attributes, I was becoming a better person.

I was getting closer to God. And I must confess to you today, I need to come back to Jesus too. And I understand it's not that simple.

I understand that some of you have really given credit to God for what he's done in your life, for how your hearts have been transformed, because so have I. I've given plenty of credit to God in my life, which is why I know from experience that we'll always have this temptation to credit ourselves, to start feeling a sense that we've done it, we've finally reached that plateau.

And that's why I love this cross chart that we've shown to you before. This cross chart is a description of how in our journey, spiritual journey, true maturity is actually a growing awareness of God's holiness.

[21 : 06] holiness. It's not that God becomes more holy, he's been pretty holy, I think, through all of eternity. But our growing awareness of it, and a growing awareness of my own sinfulness, that's spiritual maturity.

recognizing that any given moment, there's a darkness in your soul, in your heart, there's mixed motives that will never truly go away, and even as you wrestle and grow in holiness, grow in obedience, grow in serving God and being obedient to him, actually the very depths of your soul are still tainted, and there's always this growing sense of your own sinfulness.

righteousness. And that's when you realize that the cross becomes magnified, it becomes greater and greater. Not that Jesus' salvation and sort of the resurrection sort of has become greater, but your growing awareness of the value of Jesus just kind of comes back at you.

God, you have done such an amazing thing. I didn't even realize how great my debt was 13 years ago. And hopefully 13 years from now, I will realize even more.

That was a debt I could not repay and no amount of good performance could have repaid. You know, think about the last time you felt genuine emotion about that cross.

[22 : 43] in complete awe of that cross of Calvary. Like if you were a man on death row and you have now been pardoned.

Maybe imagine that you were an orphan thinking back to the day. You're an orphan with loving parents right now thinking back to the day that you heard the news that you were going to be adopted.

It's pretty amazing, right? And the cross is infinitely more amazing than that. And how you feel about it today just might be an indicator of how much you recognize and you continue to recognize the size of your debt and how much it cost God to absorb that debt.

You know, Jesus taught us to pray, forgive us our debts as a model for our prayer lives. To remember that debt.

To remember the size and magnitude of that debt. It's clear that he wanted us to remember our constant need for forgiveness.

[24 : 00] Yes, the cross has showed us that we have been forgiven. once and for all. But we are still imperfect. We are still full of mixed motives.

And we still fall short daily of God's perfect standard. Every day, there's a part of my life, however small, that still says to God, God, I don't need you in this.

I don't need you in my life. I want to live my way. I'm the God of my life. And sure, you might not say that verbally, but in your heart, there's things where you're effectively, de facto, saying that to God.

So this aspect of prayer, forgive us our debts that Jesus modeled for us, it's really about confession. Confessing our debts to God and our need for his forgiveness.

forgiveness. And the reason why I don't confess to a human priest is because I know that Jesus Christ is the high priest and he is the only person I need to access God and to access God's forgiveness.

[25 : 09] But the practice of forgiveness is still so important. And that's something I know that I neglect. This actual ritual, this actual process, this actual act of asking God for forgiveness.

But this model of prayer, this model that Lord Jesus in his Lord's Prayer modeled to us, that is something that he shows us. We need to do it intentionally and consciously, approaching God through our high priest, Jesus Christ, to ask for forgiveness.

forgiveness. But remember, as we do this, we approach a God that isn't distant. It says, our heavenly Father, our Father in heaven.

And that's how this series started. You know, we spent an entire sermon talking about our Father in heaven. So when you think about confession, how much of a much do you want to forgive your child when they genuinely confess and they're genuinely sorry?

And if that's the case, how much more does your God, your perfect heavenly Father, want to forgive you? God tells us in Scripture that he has removed our sins as far as us from, as west is to east.

[26 : 41] If you can even imagine how far west is from east, that's how far God has removed our sins. And the Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him.

So do not forget in confession that you are coming before a holy God but also a perfect heavenly Father who desires to forgive you when you genuinely confess.

So we're going to spend some more time to respond in confession after the sermon, but before we put that into practice, the Lord's Prayer tells us something really important that we must do before we come before our heavenly Father.

It says, forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. And church, that's a condition, a caveat that I always kind of gloss over and forget when I think about the Lord's Prayer.

Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven the ones who owe debt to us, our debtors.

[27 : 58] And that phrasing in the Lord's Prayer tells us that there is an intimate and direct connection between the forgiveness that we experience from God and the forgiveness that we offer to others.

That word as is important because you can also translate that as like. If you think about it, forgive us our debts like we also have forgiven our debtors.

God, forgive me just like how I forgive others. That's a scary thought, isn't it? When I thought about that, I can only ask and expect God's forgiveness of me to be like the forgiveness we extend to others.

And I want to be clear here, the forgiveness that you extend to others, it's not a way to earn God's forgiveness. I mean, we've already highlighted how impossible it is to pay our debts to God.

And it's very clear, God is so clear in Scripture that we need to put our faith in Jesus and follow Him to receive lasting forgiveness from God.

[29 : 14] But that doesn't make us perfect right away, right? As we continue to confess our sins, confess our debts, as we continue to appreciate that massive distance between God's holiness and our sinfulness, we continue to experience God's amazing grace, right?

And it's precisely because of that forgiveness, because of that joy that you experience in forgiveness that we can quickly and genuinely forgive our debtors.

You know, when I grow in appreciating that gap that we saw in the cross chart, recognizing that our debt is huge, my debt is huge, I actually start realizing the debt that others owe me is actually quite small in comparison, right?

And also, we need to think about the people. As we think about the people that we need to forgive, we need to remember that sin, that debts, although, yes, they hurt all people around us, they hurt, they show us the brokenness in the world, and they do hurt the people around you.

Sin is ultimately something that only God can be the judge of. Let's go back to the story of King David and his sin. So you remember, Nathan confronts him, and David just confesses.

[30 : 48] But what does he confess? He says, Lord, I have sinned against you. And after this episode, God actually inspires David to write Psalm 51.

And David writes this inspired prayer. In Psalm 51, he prays this, For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. Against you and you only, God.

Now, David obviously wasn't saying that his sin didn't hurt and didn't affect others. That's obviously what he isn't saying. But what he's showing us is that he recognizes that God alone is the judge of his sin.

And if a perfect God is the judge of everything, you know, the harm we cause to others, if you think about it, actually that's even more serious. Because God judges every one of us with perfect justice.

[31 : 56] So what that tells us, what Psalm 51 tells us, is that as we forgive our debtors, we don't need to hold on to that role of being judge as well.

God is the perfect judge. God is the perfect judge. And as we forgive, as we let go, as we give that burden to God, we can remember that God is the one to judge.

And that is not a burden for us to carry. And I think, church, that really helps me when I think about forgiving those who have hurt me. Our Father in heaven, forgive us our debts like we also have forgiven our debtors.

There is clearly a condition there. Can you truly say that you have experienced God's forgiveness if you're unwilling to forgive others?

How can I say that I continue to experience God's forgiveness when I continue to hold on to unforgiveness in my own heart?

[33 : 09] There is clearly a connection. Our forgiveness of others is a sign, a warning light to us of how much we understand and appreciate and have grasped the depths of God's forgiveness for us.

And this is why the Lord's Prayer teaches us, pray regularly in confession. Father, forgive our debts. And that's what we're going to spend a bit of time doing right now.

And I want to invite the band to come up and just create some space for us to reflect and pray as we put this into practice. Confession helps us to appreciate and remember how great a debt God has forgiven.

And it inspires us to forgive the much smaller debts that others owe us. And guys, I know, I know that some of us, a lot of us have experienced serious hurt and pain in our lives.

And I'm not trying to just kind of brush that aside. Those debts that others owe you are serious indeed and they might feel massive indeed.

[34 : 35] And that's why Jesus taught us in the Lord's Prayer, we have to start with recognizing that it's our Father in Heaven that we're praying to. Remember that definition of prayer that we've been sharing?

Prayer is a child calling out to their Father in Heaven, their loving Heavenly Father, in response to Him reaching down to us.

Reaching down to us like a loving Heavenly Father. And God knows every single hurt, every single debt that is owed to you.

And He wants you to know this morning that He loves you. And His love for you, your identity as His child is all you need.

So this is the time that just call out to Him. Receive His love and forgiveness again. And as you receive that love and forgiveness, let that overflow into your forgiveness of others.

[35 : 48] I'm just going to take the next five minutes or so and just practice that to live that out in your own hearts.

To pray and to confess. We're going to put a few points on the screen if that helps inspire you to kind of just give you something to latch on to.

But the important thing is just be free right now. Just be honest to pray to God to say, Our Father, my Father, forgive us our debts as we forgive those who are our debtors.