



Sunday, May 1, 2011: Forgive Us Our Debts

Scripture: Matthew 6:12; Psalm 103

Speaker: Joe Boot

Sermon Notes:

1. Jesus teaches this prayer to believers. This is not His own personal prayer, as He does not need to pray "Forgive us our debts."
2. The first three petitions of the Lord's prayer are about God and His priorities; the last four are about us and our needs.
3. The fifth petition concerns the confession of our debts. Obviously, this petition is focusing on our constant need for forgiveness of our sins.
4. We are bankrupt. We don't have anything to pay off our debts with. We need to be redeemed from debt.
5. This is what the Gospel is all about. Jesus is the only one who can make restitution for our debts.
6. V14. We are growing all the time in grace, and so confession of sin and asking for forgiveness concerns not only our relationship to God but also our human relationships.
7. Forgiving one another perfectly is not the ground for our own forgiveness, but it is an outcome of the forgiveness we have received from God.
8. This petition is a Jubilee prayer. In the Old Testament, God set aside the seventh year and the fiftieth year for the cancellation/forgiveness of debts, and the release of slaves.
9. Jubilee comes to its fulfillment in the life of Jesus. He makes restitution for us and cancels our debts.
10. The fullness of the Jubilee is yet to come. Christ's work of new creation has already begun.
11. Confession and forgiveness are closely related. Confession is not just verbal. True repentance involves reversing the damage done by a harmful act as far as possible.
12. When Zaccheus was visited by Jesus, he said that he would restore fourfold what he had wrongfully taken from others. Jesus declared: "Today salvation has come to this house."
13. Restitution was not the basis of his forgiveness, but it was the product of his repentance. Words were followed by actions. Repentance includes a sincere desire to remedy the harm that was caused.
14. Forgiveness is based on true confession, repentance, and faith.
15. Christ has made restitution God-ward for us. And now when we forgive one another, we confess and make restitution man-ward and restore fellowship.
16. Forgiveness is not about feelings. Where there is true confession and repentance we are obligated to forgive one another, seventy times seven.
17. If we are sinned against by others and they don't confess or repent, and we follow Jesus' instructions in Matthew 18 and they still do not repent, we must not harbour hatred or bitterness but give such people over to God. However, we are not to extend covenant/legal forgiveness to them.
18. When Jesus on the cross said, "Father forgive them", the word He used literally means: *defer the charges*.
19. We must be careful about declaring false forgiveness. Forgiveness is on God's terms, *confession-repentance-restitution*, not based on our emotions or feelings.
20. We do not have the right to pronounce forgiveness to absolve an unrepentant murderer or an unrepentant adulterer, for example. That is anti-nomian forgiveness.
21. We don't help or restore one another by false forgiveness.
22. This is not about demanding restitution over petty grievances, or our over-sensitivity and pride. It only concerns where God's law has been violated, that is where restitution needs to be sought.
23. Church discipline (one of the marks of the true church) has collapsed in our age because we have an anti-nomian and sentimental view of forgiveness. We expect to be let off all bad behaviour without consequences or discipline.
24. If we don't truly forgive and have our debts canceled by Christ, then we move in terms of self-destructive impulses. Only when we have experienced God's forgiveness can we forgive others.

25. Harboring of grudges needs to go, otherwise we are constantly bound by the past.
26. Where there is no repentance and restitution, guilt leads to sin and inner misery.
27. God's grace alone breaks the cycle of sin and guilt.

Application Questions

1. Does God grant us forgiveness apart from confession, repentance, and faith?
2. Is the forgiveness God offers us based on how we forgive others?
3. Can we forgive unrepentant persons? What ought we to do when wronged by someone who refuses to repent, or who offers cheap repentance?
4. What does true repentance involve?
5. Can we make any restitution or reparation for our indebtedness to God?
6. Are there situations in my life where I need to repent or forgive?