

# Pattern of Seven: Forgive Us Our Debts, As We Forgive Our Debtors

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**“Dismiss us from the guilt of our failures toward You, as we are also dismissing the guilt of those who have failed us.”**

As Jesus continued with His model prayer, He addressed the heart of the matter with which we must deal with **Our Father** if we want to be forgiven.

Jesus was not preaching the salvation message to His disciples. He was sharing the fifth petition of His heart from the depths of the [Giver portion](#) of His spirit. If any part of Jesus’ model prayer significantly points to the Cross to which He was headed, I believe it is this petition of forgiveness *given, then* received. He first lived then became every painful, hate-filled offense leveled at Him *and* us.

To put it plainly, Jesus the Lamb slain before the foundations of the earth, did not stop short or fail **so that** we could be set free from the guilt of our failures toward our heavenly Father, and toward those who have failed us. Moreover, the remaining two petitions are a continuation of His reign and His power in the faces of our need. It is to our spiritual advantage and Christ-bought freedom that we take to heart the seriousness of Jesus’ prayer.

## **Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.**

The very word ‘forgive’ elicits conflict and concerns in the heart and mind of every person who draws breath. Our willingness to forgive is first, **a choice we make**. To *become* a forgiving person requires that **the Lord gives us the faith to live this way**. We will always have something to forgive, and more so as offenses are multiplying.

We may not often or have ever thought of forgiveness and faith in the same vein, but Jesus himself posed the question, **“when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”** Luke 18:8 And one chapter before,

He said to His disciples, **“Offenses<sup>[a]</sup> will certainly come,<sup>[b]</sup> but woe to the one they come through!** Luke 17:1 HCSB

As we look deeper into this once-memorized prayer, we can be certain Jesus was teaching His disciples in preparation for the days without Him when the Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance all He told them. All of this He taught then is no less, and far more as this age quickly wears on, applicable and trustworthy for us.

Herein lies the **conflict** with our own *sinfulness* and *indebtedness*, as well as the two tracks our **concerns** run on. In one direction, the first track of our own personal sin and debt; the second track in the direction of the sin and debt others have heaped against us. [There is peace to be had in place of the conflict](#). Embedded in what appears stern in Jesus’ prayer and words of warning is Our Father’s, Son’s, and Holy Spirit’s lasting love that never fails. “And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.” I Corinthians 13:13

## **Luke 11:4**

**And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.**

While **Matthew 6:9-13** is the scriptural record of Jesus’ prayer model used in these Pattern of Seven articles, **Luke 11:1-4** is similar. That Luke uses *sins* where Matthew used *debts* is no cause for concern. The two words are close in their meaning. Matthew’s *debts* is from the Greek *opheilema*, meaning *the offense of one who has failed in duty*. Its essential meaning is ‘something that is owed, a debt or obligation.’ It also refers to ‘fault or sin’.

Luke’s verse using the word *sins* is from the Greek *hamartia*: *the error of one who has missed the way*. Whether deliberately (*by choice*) or by mistake (*unintentionally by being trapped, baited, or caused to stumble or sin*), this word describes [the departure of a person who has gotten off track](#). Don’t forget Jesus, **I Am the way** is teaching.

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Regardless of the reason, the sin is the same and the judgment it carries is the same to God. *We* are the ones who tend to judge others' *failures in duty* and *missing the way* on a personal, biased human scale. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"<sup>1</sup> is Christ's call to forgiveness, not self-justifying ego pride.

The grace of God revealed in Christ is what makes it possible for us to enter into forgiveness and human restitution – ***the making right of wrongs***. As I write, it is the essence of redemptive living, as opposed to non-redemptive continuation of the old ways inconsistent with being made a new creature in Christ Jesus.<sup>2</sup> And where there is no possibility of restitution to others, God never fails in prevailing grace for the repentant soul.

### **If you forgive...but if you do not forgive...**

Directly after Jesus' conclusion of His seven prayer petitions, He added a strong, inalienable word of truth:

**"For if you forgive others their offences, your Heavenly Father will forgive you also; but if you do not forgive others their offences, neither will your Father forgive yours."** Matt. 6:14-15

If we don't link Our Father's forgiveness with *His love and mercy* and *our faith*, guilt clutches the prison keys. The moment we forgive, we are set free to [Mercy's indebtedness](#): ongoing, lifegiving dependency on the Lord's love.

### **Forgive us as we forgive**

Once again, I appreciate Brother Ed's grace-ability to draw our attention to the beauty in the Word of God. As I sat with each point of Jesus' prayer, I was struck with the depth of passion He carried for *our* freedom to forgive.

In the Greek, the first *forgive* is ***aphes***, a form of the word meaning *dismiss us from the guilt of what we have done*. It is a plea asking for the instant removal of guilt – entered to the Righteous One as **permit it at this time**. We can make our plea, but it is based on our willingness to forgive. Our Father set the order in motion, not us.

The second *forgive* is from the Greek ***aphiemen*** and means *as I am in the act of forgiving*. There is no being done with this prayerful plea, for there is no shortage of the offenses that will continue to come as we walk by faith. The meaning of this prayer in the Greek's original verbiage Brother Ed renders as,

*"Heavenly Father, forgive us, now, for the way we have offended You as we are presently forgiving, and will continue forgiving, those who have offended us."*

### **One of our greater lessons**

This world system runs on the unrepentant and unregenerated parts of the hearts of humanity. There is no denying the increased pressure that these days of testing and trial are applying to our hearts, lives, and minds. But it is these very pressures as we move through these times of tribulation that prepare us in Christ to abide as children of God's Kingdom. Many of these pressures come in the form of those who offend us, near or far.

It is why one of our greater lessons *is and will continue to be* learning to forgive those who cause such offenses. We need the faith **the Lord gives us** to be able to live as a forgiving person. It takes His faith to believe the one we forgive will not turn on us again. Even so, the Lord of the Kingdom expects us to continue forgiving.<sup>3</sup> It is how the nature of Christ becomes our nature – the forgiven *becoming* the forgiver *who becomes* a forgiving person.

*Father, teach us to pray from a willing heart that we may know the joy and peace forgiving others brings us. Far better than holding onto resentment and unforgiveness is the cleansing power of your grace in and through us. Move on our hearts to learn to be willing to forgive that we also may be forgiven. For Your Kingdom's sake ...*

~ Nancy

Luke 17:1 a. Or *traps*, or *bait-sticks*, or *causes of stumbling*, or *causes of sin*

Luke 17:1 b. Literal - *It is impossible for offenses not to come* <sup>1</sup> Romans 3:23 <sup>2</sup> II Corinthians 5:17 <sup>3</sup> Matt. 18:21-35 -2-