

## Forgive Us Our Sins (Luke 11:4a)

This morning we come to the subject of “*Forgiveness*.” A subject that should greatly spark our attention, simply for the fact, that it is something that all of us so desperately need. Of all the realities, of all the privileges, of all the blessings and benefits, of all the mercies, of all the gracious gifts that God could give to us, nothing is more wonderful than this. Forgiveness is at the heart of the gospel. At the heart of the preaching of the cross, is the offer of forgiveness, for man’s sin.

To correctly understand this passage, it is important that we understand the kind of forgiveness that Jesus is talking about here, for there are two kinds or two categories of forgiveness we need. For understanding sake, we’ll call them “*Positional Forgiveness*,” and “*Relational Forgiveness*.” *Positional forgiveness* speaks of the forgiveness that we have received, when we initially came to Christ, believing for salvation. It was at this point, that we received forgiveness for all our sin, and are declared just before God. By our faith in Christ, all of our sin was transferred to Jesus on the cross, and He took upon Himself the punishment for our sin. And in turn, we received His righteousness. Positionally speaking, I no longer stand before God as a condemned sinner, but rather as one of His dear children.

**(Ro. 5:1)** <sup>1</sup>*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: <sup>2</sup>By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* (Before, we were enemies of God, the objects of His wrath...but now, we are at peace with Him)

**(Ro. 8:1)** <sup>1</sup>*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

There’s many, many more, that speak to the reality, that *positionally speaking*, we stand before God not as sinners, but as His dear precious children, in righteousness. (That righteousness being the righteousness of Christ.) In Christ, I stand before God as a righteous man, no longer destined for His judgment and wrath on sinners.

That is what is often referred to as positional forgiveness...referring to the forgiveness that resulted in my salvation. Through that forgiveness, our salvation is settled, we are declared righteous before God, and the **debt** has been paid, once and for all. But there’s a second aspect of forgiveness, that is often referred to as “*Relational forgiveness*.” This one speaks of the daily forgiveness we need, to stay on good terms with God you might say. This speaks of the forgiveness need, to keep our relationship with God, were it ought to be. **We still sin, don’t we?** I don’t want to, I despise sin. It grieves my heart, when I sin... Maybe it was a thought I had, or a word that I spoke in anger, or maybe something I should’ve done, but didn’t. Whatever the case, its sin... **Does it effect my salvation?** NO, that is forever settled. **Does it affect my relationship with God, here?** Yes...

**Do you see the difference?** Do you see how that even though we have been forgiven of all our sin, positionally speaking, and we do not need this one any more, how that we still need forgiveness? Though I am saved, that does not mean that I do not still sin, for I do. (***This is not a license to sin***...Many have a perverted view of Christianity, in that you can get baptized, and then go live how you want, and you’ll be ok. Not true! In Romans 3:8, Paul speaks about people who think this way, and says that there damnation is just!) **With Christ comes a change of heart!** One of the sure signs of *genuine conversion*, is a hatred and despising of sin. True believers hate sin, and want no part of it. But that does not mean that they do not sin. They do, and when they do they are grieved, and burdened over them. But thanks be unto God, we don’t have to stay that way. That’s what this passage before this morning is all about.

Here we find Jesus, teaching His disciples how to pray...and as part of that pray, He includes that daily coming before the Father for forgiveness. Each day, we are to talk with our Father, worshiping His Holy name, seeking His kingdom, His rule and reign in our lives for that day, looking to Him to provide the things we need for that day, and seeking forgiveness for anything that might be in our hearts, that shouldn't be.

<sup>4</sup>*And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.* I like to think of it, as a *daily cleansing* of our heart... I preached a message on this years ago, that I entitled, "**How to stay clean in a dirty world.**" Where I likened this plea, as taking a bath, something we should do daily. Every morning, when I get up, I start my day off with a shower; to get rid of the dirt and grime that has collected on my body from the previous day. In the same way, we need to come before each day, asking Him "*to cleanse us*" of any sin that might be there. It is a *daily cleansing* of our heart... Something we all need, for if we don't take a shower, after a while you begin to stink...right?

We find a good illustration of the forgiveness Jesus is speaking of here, in John 13:2~10... Story has it, that at the end of the last supper Jesus had with His disciples, just hours before His death on the cross, Jesus took the opportunity to teach them a very important truth. We are told, that at the end of the supper, Jesus quietly got up, and girded Himself with a towel, took a bowl of water, and began washing the disciples feet. As He did so, He came to Simon Peter, who was reluctant to let Him wash his. (*Simon knew he was unworthy, and if anyone should be washing feet, it should be him.*) But Jesus says to Simon, "*You don't understand what I'm doing right now...but you will later.*" Feeling that it wasn't right for Jesus to be washing his feet, Simon continued to resist. Jesus finally told him, "*If I don't wash you Simon, you have no part with me.*" Upon hearing that, Simon declares, that he wants him to wash not only his feet, but his head as well. Simply referring to how much he wanted to be a part of him. Jesus responded by saying "*He that is washed, doesn't need to be washed again, with the exception of his feet.*"

The point Jesus was trying to make here was, the disciples had been cleansed by Him, but they would still need their feet washed by Him on occasionally. They had taken a bath that morning, but throughout their travels through the land that day, their feet had become dirty, and in need of cleansing. That's a wonderful analogy isn't it? If you're a Christian, you've been bathed. You don't need another bath. You don't need another total cleansing. But as you walk through this dirty world, your feet may become dirty, and in need of cleansing.

That analogy serves well to explain the intent behind this part of the prayer... Each day, we are to come before the Father, seeking forgiveness, seeking Him *to cleanse our hearts* of any sin that might be there. Beloved, this is *how we stay clean in a dirty world*...by coming before God each day, allowing Him to wash and cleanse us of any sin that might be on our feet...

But notice, Jesus adds another element... Notice, I am to deal with not only "*My sins*" that I have committed, but also the "*Sins of others*" who have sinned against me. <sup>4</sup>*And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.* Understood, Christians are to be "*Characterized by Forgiveness.*" Both of our constant need of forgiveness and cleansing from God, and the extending of forgiveness to others. Our lives are to be a testimony of the "**Receiving of Forgiveness**" and the "**Rendering of Forgiveness.**"

It's important that we understand this, because "**Forgiveness**" is at the heart of the Christian faith. If you do not understand that, then you do not understand the gospel. Over the years, I have found that there are many, many folks (who attend church) that clearly do not understand the gospel...*manifested* by the fact, they do not freely and willingly extend forgiveness to others who have transgressed against them. Anyone who harbors ill will and resentment, and un-forgiveness towards another, *reveals* they have no real comprehension their own sinfulness and need of forgiveness. Until a man understands that, he will

never forgive others, as he should. It is only from the awareness of our own depravity, the awareness of the fact that we are greatly sinned against God, and are greatly indebted to Him, that we can learn to forgive others. For if God is willing to forgive someone like me, given all that I've done...*how much more* should I, be willing to forgive others who have wronged me?

As Paul puts it in Colossians 3... <sup>12</sup>*Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;* <sup>13</sup>*Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: **even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.***

If Christ can forgive me, considering everything I've done to Him and against Him... isn't it only fitting that I forgive others for what little they have wronged me? If anyone should understand forgiveness, it should be the Christian. For if you are a child of God, and have a home in heaven, you realize that this is only true, because of the grace and mercy of God towards you! You have sinned, you are deeply indebted to God, and the price is your life! But thanks be unto God, He offered up His Son on the cross, so that He would be able to overlook your sin, and forgive you. If God is willing to do that, for someone like us, how can we not forgive men when they wrong us?

<sup>12</sup>*Put on therefore, **as the elect of God**...* As the "Children of God"... as the children of God we should reflect the image of our Father, right? As He is *merciful, and kind, humbleness of mind, meek and longsuffering*... shouldn't we be as well? He "Forbears us," **puts up with us**... does He not? He overlooks us... does He not?

... *if any man have a quarrel against any: **even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.***

Just as Christ showed mercy and forgiveness to you... show the same to others. Beloved, this is the "Very Stuff" that true Christianity is made of! This is what makes Christianity different than simply religion. In Matthew, Jesus explained this...(Mt. 9)

<sup>11</sup>*And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?* <sup>12</sup>*But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, **They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*** <sup>13</sup>*But go ye and learn what that means, **I will have mercy, and not sacrifice:** for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

Christ explains, that He's not interested in that we just *do right things*... He's not interested in our "Acts of worship," as eluded to here in the offering of sacrifices. He wants more than our "good deeds," He desires "Acts of love and mercy" towards others... towards the sick, the hurting, the dying in sin...

... *if any man have a quarrel against any: **even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.***

Just as we have wronged Christ, and He forgave us... we are to forgive those who wrong us! We are never more like Christ, than when we show love and mercy to those who have wronged us! **Right?**

Turn with me to Matthew 6... where Matthew records this same teaching as Luke, on the matter of prayer. Jesus said, "<sup>12</sup>*And forgive us our debts, **as we forgive our debtors.***" The same thing He says in Luke 11. But here in Matthew, He goes onto elaborate, stressing the requirement of forgiving others.

**(Mt.6)** <sup>14</sup>*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: <sup>15</sup>But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

There's a reason that Jesus went on here in Matthew to elaborate on forgiveness, whereas in Luke He did not. That being, that here in Matthew, the heart of His message was aimed at the Pharisees and Scribes, the religious leaders of the day. He emphasizes the requirement of forgiving others, in order to be forgiven, for the fact that these men hated and despised sinners.

In Luke, there was no need for Jesus to elaborate, because the men He was speaking to, were fully aware of their sinful condition. They were nothing like the “*blind*” Pharisees and Scribes, who saw themselves as righteous. The disciples, were fully aware of their depravity, they understood their need of forgiveness, and gladly received the offer of forgiveness that Jesus offered them, and freely offered it to others. Keep in mind, the disciples had been traveling from city to city, to offer other sinners, this forgiveness.

But here in Matthew (at the start of His ministry, about 3 years earlier), Jesus is teaching a diverse group of people. And at the center of the focus of His sermon, was the Pharisee’s and Scribes, the religious leaders of the day. Understood, the entire Sermon on the Mount, was a confrontation with these men, and the corrupt religion they proposed.

These men prided themselves as being the “*Children of God*,” and considered themselves to be “*Godly and Righteous men*,” by their adherence to the moral principles of God’s Law. All of which resulted in a haughty spirit, feeling they were better than those around them. They looked upon those outside the religious system, as dirty, depraved and disgusting sinners, who deserved the fires of hell. They judged and condemned them, separated themselves from them, wanting nothing to do with them...all in the name of God.

Blind to truth...they too were just as vile, just as sinful... Their adherence to the moral principles of God had not help them, they were just as sinful as they were. It had only masked the problem, it had only given the appearance of being righteous. Truth was, they were just as sinful and just as guilty as the ones they condemned! Jesus confronted them on this matter in chapter 7...

(Mt. 7) <sup>1</sup>*Judge not, that ye be not judged. <sup>2</sup>For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. <sup>3</sup>And why behold thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but consider not the beam that is in thine own eye? <sup>4</sup>Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? <sup>5</sup>Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.*

There’s no question that Jesus is speaking directly at the religious leaders of the day... They were to be the example of godliness, and righteousness... But these men despised and hated their fellow man... which is NOTHING like God! Even with all of their so-called righteous living, they manifested they were anything but godly! For God is full of mercy and grace, and stands ready to receive and forgive sinners who come to Him!

Rather than reaching out to sinners in mercy and forgiveness...these men judged and condemned them! And here, Jesus declares, “<sup>1</sup>*Judge not, that ye be not judged. <sup>2</sup>For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*” Which is a warning! It’s a warning to those who JUDGE others, in the sense of CONDEMNING them! Which is exactly what these self-righteous Pharisees did. Rather than reach out to them in mercy and love, they judged and condemned them, considering themselves to be righteous. Problem was, they were not as righteous as they thought, and Jesus makes that crystal clear here, in the analogy of the “*Mote and the Beam*.”

The analogy of the “*Mote & Beam*” (*Splinter & Log*) was declaring the Pharisees to be many times worse than the Gentiles they condemned! (*Splinter to Log RATIO*). Why? Because truth was, they were just as sinful as they were, even more given the fact they were “*blind to it*.” As a result of this blindness, they saw no need for forgiveness...thus no need to show forgiveness.

Beloved, if there’s anything we know, as followers of Christ, is the fact that we are sinners... We fully realize, that we are fallen, depraved men, in need of a Savior. Our boasting is not in our “good works,” but rather, in the “Goodness of God,” as manifested in the cross! We understand that without Christ, none

of us would have any hope, we would all be destined for the judgment and wrath of God...then Hell. But thanks be unto God...there is hope, there is hope. And that hope is in Christ, the forgiver of sin...

*“<sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”*

Understood, this daily asking of “*Forgiveness*” and extending of “*Forgiveness*” to others is at the heart of the Christian witness... A daily asking of the Father for forgiveness of our sin, is an acknowledgement of our unrighteousness. Rather than coming across to people as holy and righteous people, we openly profess that we are sinful and constantly stand in need of mercy and forgiveness. This is a good witness to those around us, because they have the same need. Asking God for forgiveness daily, bears witness that we are no different than they are, we are sinners as well. The difference, we just have found love and acceptance in Jesus Christ. Then as we extend love and forgiveness to those who have wronged us...they can see Christ in us!