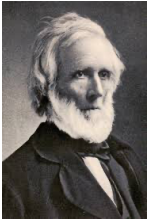


Last week we discussed **Matthew 6:12** – “And forgive us our debts...” **Philip Graham Ryken** said: “When we go to Him, weighed down with the debt of all our guilt and sin, he does not sit down with us to work out a payment plan. Instead, he offers forgiveness full and free.” Are you working out a payment plan with God or willing to accept His gift? Are you going with genuine repentance?

Matthew 6:12, 14-15 – “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors...For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” What is **Jesus** telling us here? Why would our forgiveness of others’ sins be tied with our sins’ forgiveness?



Horace Bushnell (1802-1876) was an American Congregational minister and theologian. He had a marked influence upon theology in America, and wrote various books on religion. Four of his books were of particular importance: *Christian Nurture* (1847), *Nature and the Supernatural* (1858), *The Vicarious Sacrifice* (1866), and *God in Christ* (1849).

“All this on the ground that there is such an analogy between the forgiveness of Christ to us, and ours to our brethren and our fellow men,” Why does **Bushnell** say “our brethren and our fellow men” when discussing forgiveness?

“...as makes them virtually alike in spirit and kind, though not equal of course in degree.” What is **Bushnell** talking about here? Why are they not equal in degree?

“...holding still the duty of forgiveness, we have it in a form so cheap and low, as to signify little when it is practiced. “I will forgive him, but I hope never to see him again.” **Christ** does not say that to the man whom he forgives.” What is **Bushnell** saying here?

“What a mockery is it for me to forgive, when there is no forgiveness wanted, and my adversary has not even come into the rights?” Have you ever been in a situation where you were wronged, and that person never wanted forgiveness for what they had done?

How did that make you feel? How are we to forgive others when they don’t even care about us and what they did?

“Well then, suppose that **Christ** had stopped just there. Nobody is asking to be forgiven, all are in their sins and mean to be there.

They love their sins. They have asked no release or forgiveness. They are not repentant in the least degree.” What should **Christ** do?

Bushnell asks: “...what is forgiveness thrust upon souls that do not even so much as care for it?” What do you think?

“The real gist of his forgiveness antedates (comes before) their penitence; it is what he does, shows, suffers, in a way of gaining his enemy – bringing him off and away, that is, from his wrongs, to seek, and, in a true sorrow, find, the forgiveness that has been searching beforehand so tenderly after him...”. Have you ever wondered why **Christ** had to suffer on the cross for our sins?

Did **Christ** have to suffer for his believers or only for the non-believers?

To the Christian, forgiveness starts long before the repentance begins. **Bushnell** asks, “Can you give yourself for your brother, or do you hold off in the stiff pretense, that he must come to you first and right himself?” Giving yourself as **Christ** did. What does it mean?



Dorothy L. Sayers (1893 - 1957) was an English mystery writer and popularizer of Christian theology. Her most popular books are: *Gaudy Night* (1935), *The Nine Tailors* (1934), *Strong Poison* (1930), *Murder Must Advertise* (1933), and *Whose Body?*(1923).

1. On forgiveness, **Sayers** says; “There is the kind that says: “I forgive her as a Christian, but I shall never speak to her again.” This is “Christian forgiveness, which is no forgiveness at all,” and need not be discussed.”

What experiences have you had with this type of forgiveness? How is the feeling about this person years later?

2. There is the forgiveness that says, “I forgive you, Jones, and I will pray for you.” This, though it can base itself strongly on ethical and scriptural sanction, shares with pacifism the serious practical disadvantage of so inflaming

the evil passions of Jones that if the injured party had malignantly determined to drive Jones to the devil he could scarcely have hit upon a surer way.” What is **Sayers** saying here? Why is this type of forgiveness not forgiveness at all?

3. “There is the conditional: “I will forgive you on condition you say you are sorry and never do it again.” That has about it something which smacks too much of a legal bargain, and we are forced to remember that no man is so free from trespass himself that he can afford to insist on conditions.” Why is forgiveness with conditions not forgiveness at all? What does forgiveness do?

Sayers goes on: “It (forgiveness) does not wipe out the consequences of the sin. The words and images used for forgiveness in the New Testament frequently have to do with the cancellation of a debt: and it is scarcely necessary to point out that when a debt is cancelled, this does not mean that the money is miraculously restored from nowhere. It means only that the obligation originally

due from the borrower is voluntarily discharged by the lender. ...if you are forgiving and I am repentant, then we share the consequences and gain a friendship.” What is **Sayers** saying here about forgiveness?

Why does it take two parties for there to be forgiveness? How can we forgive others if they are not repentant?

“Like the father of the prodigal (reckless) son, God can see repentance coming a great way off and is there to meet it, and the repentance is the reconciliation.” What does it say about our lives that we have the choice for reconciliation with God? Why?



C. S. Lewis (1898 - 1963) was a British novelist and Christian apologist. His most famous books include the universally acclaimed fantasy series *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the theological masterpiece *Mere Christianity*, and the satirical *The Screwtape Letters*.

C. S. Lewis in discussing trying to forgive someone for thirty years; “When the thing actually happened ...my feeling was “But it’s so easy. Why didn’t you do it ages ago?” ...like learning to swim. There are months during which no

efforts will keep you up; then comes the day and hour and minute after which, and ever after, it becomes almost impossible to sink.” What is **Lewis** saying about trying to forgive and then the feeling after true forgiveness occurs?

“The important thing is that a discord has been resolved, and it is certainly the great Resolver who has done it. ...No evil habit is so ingrained nor so long prayed against (as it seemed) in vain, that it cannot, even in dry old age, be whisked away.”

By forgiving others, we are acting as children of God. Just as our Father forgives, so should we. It’s up to you.