

Wellspring – Life & Teaching of Jesus (45) Sermon on the Mount – Forgiveness and Deliverance (Matt 6:12-15)

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matt 6:12-15)

Important things need to be repeated!

Today we're going to finish our study of the Lord's prayer, and also look at the statement about forgiveness that Jesus makes immediately following the end of the prayer.

Jesus here reiterates a principle that he has already stated early in the Sermon. We covered it in study 17 of this series where we looked at the principles of living under the mercy of God – “*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*” (Matt 5:7). We looked then at the fact that God's glory is revealed in his mercy and that he invites us to live under that mercy – but we cannot position ourselves within the mercy of God while we are withholding mercy and forgiveness from others. In the prayer Jesus puts it succinctly, used the word “debt” which means something which we owe – a moral or financial obligation. Immediately following the prayer he makes it clear that this includes to sins or trespasses.

Why is it that God is unwilling to forgive those who will not themselves forgive others?

Think of the expression “to wipe the slate clean.” A slate is a term for a blackboard used in school – yesterday's lessons would be wiped off and a fresh start made for today's lesson. The phrase means to forget everything that is in the past and to start afresh – with a clean “slate”. What Jesus is saying is that the “slate” of our lives has two sides – on one side are written the wrong things we have done, and on the other side are written the wrong things that have been done to us. God's forgiveness is like putting the whole slate into a cleansing solution that makes it completely clean on both sides. What you can't do is cleanse one side and not the other. It's the complete package – all or nothing.

This principle is repeated by Jesus on a number of occasions – culminating in the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matt 18:21-35. It is crystal clear from Jesus' teaching that he requires us to be willing to show mercy and forgiveness to others, otherwise we cannot receive it for ourselves. It's not that God is unwilling to be merciful to me, but his mercy and his forgiveness comes as a complete package with two sides (1) I am given the grace to forgive everyone who has hurt or wronged me, (2) All my sin and wrongdoing is completely and permanently forgiven. I simply can't receive one part of the package without the other – it's all or nothing!

This is a very important principle for us to grasp – which is why Jesus repeats it so often!

Unforgiveness is one of the primary ways in which Satan gains a stronghold in people's lives

In *Ephesians 4:27* Paul tells us not to give the devil any foothold in our lives, and he goes on the following verses to list forgiveness as one of the ways we avoid this. It is significant that we pray about forgiveness **before** we ask for deliverance from the evil one. God can't give you deliverance when you're holding on to unforgiveness. The parable in Matthew 18 finished with the unforgiving servant being **delivered into the hands of the torturers** (v34) – a clear picture of demonic oppression. When you hold on to unforgiveness, resentment and bitterness towards another person, the only person you hurt is yourself!

Temptation and deliverance

Do not lead us into temptation

There is no doubt that we will have to endure temptation. Jesus was tempted, not as God, but as a man – and *Heb 2:18* says that because he has been tempted he is able to help us when we are tempted. In *Heb 4:15* this point is reiterated when it says “*for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin.*”

Part of our victorious walk as believer is that we learn to conquer temptation and overcome the evil one, just as Jesus did in the wilderness. James gives a clear outline of how temptation sets out to trap and entice us.

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. (James 1:12-15)*

**The NIV says "evil desires" but the word simply means desire or longing. It is particularly used in reference to a desire for that which is wrong or forbidden – but is not inherently evil. Jesus was tempted but there was no evil desire within him.*

So if we know we will be tempted, why do we pray "do not lead us into temptation"?

Because I do not want to put myself in the way of temptation. Jesus has already taught that "if your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out!" In other words, remove any obvious source of temptation from your life. This prayer is saying much the same thing – praying that I will not walk into any trap that Satan may be setting for me.

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. (1 Cor 10:13)

We **will** be tempted, but we have this great promise that God is faithful and will not allow us to be tempted beyond that which we can bear. By praying "lead me not into temptation" I am claiming this promise.

Deliver us from the evil one

Our fight is not against flesh and blood but against Satan and his evil forces. But God has given each one of complete authority to overcome the evil one and to stand against all his wicked schemes.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. (Eph 6:10-13)

He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8)

God is training us to be warriors and to stand against the wiles of the devil. We have the armour of God – and as we take our place in God's army and begin to destroy his works it will become increasingly important to pray this prayer – "Lord, deliver me from the evil one!"

The declaration of praise

The model prayer starts with a declaration of adoration and worship, "Our Father... hallowed be your name" and finishes (in some versions) with a great declaration of praise... *Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.* (This declaration is not in some NT manuscripts.)

Praise is an essential element of our prayer life – it involved declaration of who God is and of what he has done and builds faith into our lives as well as releasing the power of God into our world.

David knew the secret and the power of praise – we need to ensure that our prayer life is framed in praise, honour and adoration of our glorious heavenly Father. Spend time meditating on the Psalms and use them as a pattern for your own prayer and praise.