

Will God Forgive Our Sins?

by Bill Crews

In what men have called “the Lord’s prayer,” in which Jesus was not praying but rather teaching His disciples to pray, Jesus taught His followers to pray, “*And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors*” (Matthew 6:12). That He was using the word “*debts*” to refer to sins, our sins against God and the sins of others against us, is shown by:

- (1) The expanded words of verses 14 and 15 (If we forgive the sins of others against us, God will forgive our sins against Him; but if we will not forgive the sins of others against us, God will not forgive our sins against Him.)
- (2) The words of Luke 11:4 (“*And forgive us our sins; for we ourselves also forgive everyone that is indebted to us.*”) where Jesus was also later teaching His disciples to pray.
- (3) The parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18:23-35 (in which a very large debt is used to represent one’s sins against God, while a very small debt is used to represent the sins of one person against another).

The lesson is very simple and emphatic: God will not forgive our sins against Him while we are unwilling or refuse to forgive the sins of another person against us. Of course the guilty party must be penitent, acknowledge his sins, and ask for forgiveness (as did the servant with the smaller debt in the parable).

Proverbs 28:13 says. “*He that covereth his transgressions (or sins) shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall obtain (or have) mercy.*” Not only must we forgive others who sin against us before God will forgive our sins against Him, we must also be filled with godly sorrow for our sins (2 Corinthians 7:9-10), repent of them (Acts 17:30; 3:19; 2:38; 8:22 -- repentance is a change of mind with regard to our sins, accompanied by a resolve of the will to turn away from them), acknowledge them or admit them or confess them to God (Luke 15:18-21; 18:13; 1 John 1:9). We live at a time when and in a place where people who do wrong are dissuaded from accepting personal responsibility for their conduct and persuaded to blame others, or their upbringing, or their environment, or society, or their genes. When we choose to do wrong, when we defy authority, when we act lawlessly or immorally, we make a tragic mistake if we then choose to go into denial, or to try to hide or cover up our sins, or to rationalize and attempt to justify our wrong-doing, or to simply blame others.

To become a Christian one must **hear** the gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15; Romans 1: 16), **believe** the gospel (thus believing in the Christ of the gospel -- Mark 16:15-16; Acts 8:35-37), **repent** of his sins against God (Acts 2:38; 3:19), **confess** Jesus as Lord (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10), and **be baptized** into Christ for the forgiveness of his sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26-27). To be forgiven of sins against God, whether transgression or neglect, committed *after* becoming a Christian, one must **repent** of his sins (Acts 8:22; Revelation 2:4-5, 16, 21-22; 3:3, 19), **confess** those sins to God (1 John 1:9), and **ask** His forgiveness (Acts 8:22). Please notice that in both God’s plan of salvation for the alien sinner and God’s plan of salvation for the Christian who errs, repentance of sins is a necessary requirement. Only God can always know whether one repents or not, and only God can forgive sin.

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