

The Lord's Prayer, Part 2

Luke 11:4

March 22, 2020

You can grab your Bibles and open them to Luke 11:1 to 4 and we will finish our study of the Lord's Prayer, Lord willing. Last week we studied the first three petitions and we're going to consider the, the, the final two for today. In Luke 11:2 to 4, Jesus gave his disciples a pattern for prayer. Teaching them how to pray in response to the request of one of his disciples. And so, Jesus taught them to pray this way, "Father, hallowed be your name. Your Kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread and forgive us our sins, for we," also, "we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation."

There are five petitions there. The first two sympathize with God's interest. They put God, God's name, God's will ahead of our own interest; even before we make one petition about our

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

daily lives. But then, the last three petitions, after we framed our prayer in God's name, and in his will, in his interests. The last three petitions, are about, are about our interests and about the regular concerns of our daily lives. But even, as we speak of our interests and we speak of our concerns, it's important to point out that, the Lord's prayer and all true prayer, really, this prayer is about lining up our hearts with God's heart. Prayer is not about God considering, us and our wills. Doing what we want. It's not about conforming God to us. Making the, the, creator bow to the creature. Prayer is about us being conformed to him. It's about us learning to sympathize with his thinking and learning to want what he wants, in order, that we might do what he wants us to do.

And that's abundantly clear in the first two petitions: Hallowed be your name, and your kingdom come. To see God's name, exalted, and glorified, and hallowed, and to see his will accomplished on earth to see the extension of his kingdom, to see the spread of his dominion over the entire earth, that is what we want more than anything else. And even as we transition, in our prayer time, into more mundane matters of daily life, like our daily

GRACE CHURCH



need for bread. The point of praying is to line our hearts up with Gods.

We conform our ex, expectations to God's promise. To his stated intention to provide for us and care for us, according to his will. In prayer, we make a practice of accepting whatever comes from God's hand for that day. Never demanding more, but always receiving everything that he gives us with gratitude. We come daily to our father. Always mindful, always grateful that he never tires of us, but that he receives us, gladly, as a father who loves to hear the voices of his children. And as the days and the weeks, the months, the years go by, in our Christian lives, we are drawn by his loving ways. All the more learning to trust in his goodness. Drawn ever deeper into a more intimate communion with him. So that we are conformed to his perfect image.

So, the Lord's prayer, like all true prayer, it's about intimate communion with our father in heaven. It's, it's how we learn to partake of the divine nature that he might conform us

more and more into his image and that couldn't be more evident, as we come into this fourth and fifth petition.

The fourth petition, Luke 11:4, "Forgive us our sins. We all, We ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us," and then finally, "Lead us not into temptation." So, we've talked about praying for God's exaltation, his dominion, his provision. Today, we're going to learn about praying for absolution, which is God's forgiveness and then, also, praying for God's protection.

First, let me make an observation before we start to unpack a bit of an outline here. When we come to the petitions about routine matters of our daily lives, the, the need for daily bread, forgiveness of sins, and protection from falling into temptation. Notice how Jesus has given greater weight to our spiritual lives.

Those three petitions, they are all connected to one another. The, the conjunction 'and' keeps those petitions joined together. But there's just one petition for our physical needs.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

There are two petitions for our spiritual needs. Care for the body is important, to be sure. God has made us, as human beings, of flesh and spirit. Body and soul were composed of parts. God has joined the material to the immaterial and, to him, both parts matter. Otherwise, he wouldn't have created them.

We're not platonic dualists. We don't believe that the spiritual is higher than the physical. We don't believe that the body doesn't matter, that it's inconsequential, that it's inherently evil. We don't believe that the spirit is inherently good. In fact, it's from our dead spirits that we need to be born again.

Since God has made us both physical and spiritual, both of those components, of what it means to be human, matter to God. And yet, we still need to recognize the proportionality in what Jesus tells us to pray here, one petition for the body, two for the soul. That is a good thing to remember during these troubled times, isn't it? When so many are concerned about mitigating the spread of a virus on the one hand. While others are alarmed that mitigating the spread is going to destroy the economy. Both are

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

concerns having to do with the body, with that prayer for daily bread.

Seems we're being forced to choose these days between today's health and tomorrow's livelihood. As the world's governments react, as the public health and infectious disease control experts scramble to flatten out the curve, so hospitals and health care providers are not utterly overwhelmed by the numbers of people infected and flooding the hospitals. There is a cost, isn't there, to all this.

There's a financial cost and an emotional cost and some would call it a, psy, psychological cost, of the isolation and the change to the economy. Kids coming out of schools and people not going to businesses, and restaurants not open anymore, and all the rest. And I don't know about you, but I am seeing a lot of sinful responses to this health scare, to this social isolation and, also, to the looming financial crisis.

One of our law enforcement officers told me that as bars and restaurants have closed, liquor sales are booming. People are

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

buying up all the alcohol. In fact, marijuana sales have spiked, as well. In Washington and California and Colorado, many seemed intent on self-medicating, on numbing themselves with drugs, and alcohol, and riding out this little crisis, stoned.

Not only that, but now that sporting events are on hold, gamblers have started betting on the weather, of all things. I want to tell them, weather men have been doing that for a long time. But gamblers have got to have something to think about, something to gamble on. Spring breakers in Florida, they keep on partying. They keep on piling up, high, their sins of debauchery, and immorality, and drunkenness, and all the rest.

On the other side, you find the more sober minded ones in society. Whether they tend toward caution about the health scare or they tend toward skepticism about the health scare, on the other hand. I'm seeing anxiety, anger coming out from both sides. Some, they're sheltering in place. Whether the government orders it or not. They're tucked away. They're stockpiled with food, toilet paper. They got about 18 cats pawing all around them.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

Others seem to be buying more and more guns, and stock piling ammo. Getting ready for some kind of a zombie apocalypse or something like that. But both sides, on either side of that worry, and fear, and anxiety. Both sides are heaping scorn and ridicule on one another. Scorn and ridicule on their fellow human beings. You see it in the media. Whether it's the mainstream media or social media. You see the fear and the worry is palpable. The pride of each side seems to be intolerable.

Everyone thinks that they're on the right side of this issue. They think they see things clearly. They act more responsibly than the other side, and most logically, in keeping with all the data, and all the facts, and everything else that's out there. In all of the noise, in all the inundation of the stories, the bombardment of story after story and feed after feed: You know what we're not hearing much about in the news? We're not hearing a public call to repentance. We're not hearing anyone call us to entreat God, to humble ourselves before a holy and righteous God.

GRACE CHURCH



Greeley

Get on our knees, and confess our sins to God, and seek his forgiveness. And folks, the nations of the world have much to confess and seek forgiveness for. Do they not? Things like sexual immorality, infidelity, and then destroying the evidence of that immorality, and the murderous practice of infanticide, in this country. God hates the bloodshed of those sins. Things like faithlessness to the covenant of marriage. Very few take their covenant seriously, any longer, but God does. The Lord has been a witness, Malachi 2:14, "between you and the wife of your youth, you've acted treacherously against her faithless." So, she is your companion and your wife by covenant.

Things like injustice, greed, violence, covetousness. We, throughout the world, no matter what country we live in, we are super saturated with sin. We may be waiting in vain. As Christians, we may be waiting in vain for the world to reflect on its sins against God. We may be waiting in vain for the world to confess sins and repent, turn to Christ. And as the, this virus spreads around the world, as the financial markets collapse, as the things that we have relied on totter and sway, really seems like a good time to reconcile with God, don't you think?

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

Nations of the world may not consider its sins, may not confess them to God, may not turn to Christ in repentance and faith, but let that not be so for the church. The Church of Jesus Christ should do all those things. It is time for judgment to begin with the house of God. And whether in times of plenty or in times of great need. Whether in sickness or in health. Our greatest needs are never physical. Which means our prayers ought not to be preoccupied with all the physical, temporal, material matters of life.

Our deepest needs are spiritual. And so, our greatest concerns in prayer should be about spiritual matters. What pertains to maintaining godliness. What pertains to our holiness. What pertains to us walking in righteousness and pursuing righteousness. That which affects our relationship with God ought to be the focus of our prayers. We're so thankful, aren't we, that Jesus has simplified that list of all the things we can pray for, he's boiled it down to just two things at the end of the Lord's Prayer; spiritual pardon and spiritual protection. In verse 4, we're to pray for spiritual pardon and spiritual protection. Or according to our outline, we're to pray for

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

absolution and protection. Which looks backward and forward.
Absolution looking backward and protection looking forward.
Looking to the past. Looking to the future.

In our daily prayers, we're concerned about taking care of the sins of yesterday or moments ago, even and then asking God to protect us from sinning tomorrow, or even with our next step. So it's, "Give us each day our daily bread," verse 3, and then this in verse 4 "And forgive us our sins and lead us not into temptation." So, we're going to consider, our need for absolution and forgiveness of our sins, and, also, our need for protection.

You've been following this series with us. We're looking, this is point four, in our outline. Pray for God's absolution and then also, point five in our outline, a little later, pray for God's protection. Pray for God's absolution, point four. Pray for God's protection, point five.

Again, Jesus said, when you pray, say, father, and then in verse 4, "forgive us our sin, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation." These are massively important petitions and tremendously effective, as well, because of their sanctifying power, because of their power to transform us, and at the very core, the very depth of our being.

These petitions have the power to conform us into the very likeness of God. Yes, they give us comfort, assurance, peace to know that we're reconciled with God, to know that there's nothing between God and us that there is no division because of our sin. Yes, they give us confidence, as we go forward, in God's strength, walking in holiness, resisting temptation, never falling, and failing, but more than that, these petitions have the power to turn us into humble people. People that can learn from God, people who are teachable, people that are moldable, responsive to God. So, they can turn us into humble people, on the one hand, and then, also, turn us into meek people. Meek people on the other hand, making us forgiving and merciful. Purified people for God's own possession. People who are zealous for good works, because we share in the very character of God the father, who is by nature, compassionate and merciful.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

Now I want to show you these two sides of this. These two petitions making us a humble people and a meek people. I want to show you this by posing several questions of interpretation that come up in this verse. These are theological questions, that, that grapple with this issue of forgiveness. We ask, as we ask and answer these questions, we're going to see how this petition has power to transform us into humble people and into meek people.

Here are the questions, several here. First, what does Jesus mean by describing our offenses as sins and then as debts? Sins and debts. What distinction, if any, is he making there? Is he intending to make? Is there any distinction at all?

Second thing, second question: How is it, that we as Christians are in need of forgiveness for our sins when, isn't this true, that we're already justified by God? So, do we already possess a pardon? Why are we praying for a pardon? What is this petition about?

A third question. God's forgiveness here sounds like it's conditioned upon our forgiving others. Does that make God's pardon conditional? I thought forgiveness was an unconditional gift of God. I think, I've been taught that since Sunday school. So, do we have that wrong? Is there something to correct here? And fourth does the father ever lead his children into temptation? I mean, why would we pray to prevent that? God doesn't lead us into temptation, does he?

So, with those four questions. Those identified. Let's walk through them. And we're gonna put those four questions under two headings for this morning. Becoming humble people, who reconcile with God and becoming meek people, who resemble God. So, number one, becoming humble people, who reconcile with God. And number two, becoming meek people, who resemble God.

First heading, number one: Becoming humble people, who reconcile with God. Under this heading, we're going to tackle those first two questions, starting with this one, What does Jesus mean by describing our offenses in the way he's described them here, in verse 4? Notice, when they are between us and God,

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

our offenses, Jesus refers to them as sins and then, when they are between ourselves and others, he describes them as debts, indebtedness.

The first term sin, that's a general term. It's a large, comprehensive term. It's a word *hamartia*. Translates the Hebrew word *khata*, which means to miss the mark. It's like an archer with bad aim that can't hit the target. That's what we are. God sets the target. He says: Here's the bullseye. Hit it perfectly every time and every time we let an arrow fly, we miss the target, because our aim is off, because we are dead in our trespasses and sins. Because we are depraved as we are, you know, in you know, have original sin, and we suffer that malady. We will always miss the mark.

So, a sin is an infraction. A sin is a violation. It's a transgression, and a transgression always points to a standard. Which is the holy law of God. So, sin, *hamartia*, this is the broadest, most comprehensive New Testament term to speak of anything that is opposed to God whatsoever, a violation of his revealed law. Second term there, debt. Debt means, what we are

used to thinking it means, here on our own language and our own cultural societal usage.

The word debt comes from the business world, the finance world. It refers to something that's owed. Refers to something that's contractually required. Financial background of this term, that is, it is the basis, then, for a moral and ethical sense. So, what is owed to another human being, morally. That's this term. And what is required ethically, of us. So, an ethical moral debt to humanity.

So, when Jesus used the term sin, we think in vertical terms. We think in terms of our transgression of the law of God. We think in terms of what God has required. What God has commanded, and our violation or adherence to that standard. With the word debt, we're thinking of our offenses in horizontal terms. We're thinking in terms of moral and ethical obligations among human beings, a man to man, woman to woman.

Another way to look at this distinction is through the lens of the biblical mandate to love. Greatest commandment is to "love

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. And then the second, which is like it, is to love our neighbor as ourselves." And it is important to note that the same God who commanded love for God, also, commanded love for our neighbor.

You see that reflected in the Ten Commandments. By the way, there's a record of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 verses 3 to 17. And there's another record of the Ten Commandments in , and will be read, in our daily Bible reading for today, in Deuteronomy 5:6 to 21. You see, in the first table of the Ten Commandments: commandments one through four. They stipulate our love for God. You see, in the second table of the Ten Commandments, commandments five through ten: They stipulate our love for others, for humanity.

So, the God who commanded the one, commanded the other, as well. So, we've become moral debtors against our fellow man when we break any of the commandments in the second table, dishonoring our parents, murder, adultery, stealing, bearing false witness, and coveting. And by the way, coveting takes all those previous sins even deeper into our hearts, going into the

internal motivations, thoughts, not just our outward speech, behavior and all that. It's also inward.

God takes note of dishonoring thoughts and attitudes toward our parents. He takes note of angry thoughts, which anger leads to murder. He takes note of the lustful thoughts, the lustful things that turn to fornication and adultery. All those sins, all of them driven by covetousness and greed. So, we have a moral and ethical duty to love our neighbor and when we violate that love, as is stipulated in the law of God, we become debtors to our fellow man.

We are indebted to others or others are indebted to us, as Jesus acknowledges here. We're also, though, debtors to God. We're debtors before God. Whether we violate our duty to love God or our duty to love man. We become debtors to God, if we violate any of those commandments. For the same God who commanded love for God, also commanded love for man. When we break God's law, we are debtors to God's law. Debtors to God, because we've committed sins against God.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

Just to illustrate this, remember David's incident of adultery with Bathsheba. That one sin, you need to realize it involved a whole host of sins, didn't it? God sent Nathan to David to confront him and tell him, David, you're the man. You're the man who has violated, who's stolen the little lamb from your neighbor, when you have, you have flocks upon flocks of sheep. You went to your neighbor and stole his wife. You're the man.

2 Samuel 12:7, you remember David's reply. David said to Nathan very simply, "I have sinned against the Lord." It's what he said. I sinned against the Lord. Against the Lord. Okay, certainly, but what, what are you talking about, David, didn't you, didn't you sin against your servants? I mean, sending them on evil errands, to go and grab that woman and bring her to your palace.

Didn't you sin against Uriah. I mean you, you deceived him, got him drunk, and then you sent him out to the battlefield and murdered him. Not only that, but didn't you sin against Joab? And didn't you sin against many other servants, by involving all of them in a murderous plot? A national cover up to avoid an

embarrassing scandal of injustice, and greed, and covetousness, and murder, and adultery.

Oh, David was a debtor all right. He was a debtor. He was a debtor to the entire kingdom. He owed a debt of love to his neighbor and he violated that debt, but technically speaking, his sins, his actual transgressions, they were against the one who commanded him, you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal. Driving it all home, you shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

Uriah didn't give those commandments, God did. Joab didn't give any of those commandments. Bathsheba didn't give any of those commandments. God gave the commandments and so, his transgression, technically speaking, his sin is against God. His sin started with a covetous heart, and it only ended after he broke nearly all the commandments of the second table; murder, adultery, stealing, bearing false witness, covetousness, and in covetousness he'd forsaken the worship of God, God himself.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

He committed idolatry against God. Paul makes that connection very clear, in Colossians 3:5, calling covetousness, idolatry. So, when David, when he answered Nathan, and he said, I've sinned against the Lord. He wasn't being cavalier. He wasn't being callous. He wasn't being coldly technical, ignoring all the deadly repercussions of the sin, of his sin. He wasn't ignoring the, the, hurt and the pain that he'd inflicted upon other people. He wasn't ignore, ignoring the guilt that he brought on other people in the entire kingdom. Of course, he recognized the debts that he'd piled up against his neighbors. He failed in his moral and his ethical duty to all of them and mark this, his kingdom paid for it from then on.

But David did give precise answer to Nathan. A theologically informed answer to Nathan. He said, "I have sinned against Yahweh. I've sinned against the Lord." Same thing in Psalm 51:4, the poetic reflection on all of that terrible sin, he says, "Against you, and you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight."

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

Folks, David is there as an example for us, isn't he? He's there as an example. Which one of us can say I have made my heart pure. I'm clean from my sin. No one can, right? "The heart is deceitful above all things, and is desperately sick," Jeremiah 17:9. "For all have sinned," Romans 3:23, all "fall short of the glory of God." Sins, debts, that is what stands between us and God.

In Isaiah 1:18, God describes our sins there as scarlet. They're like dark crimson stains. Our sins are like blood stains that cannot be removed. They are there as permanent evidence of our guilt and shame before an all knowing, all seeing, omnipotent, omniscient God. Our debts against God, they're, also, described in terms of great weight, crushing burden.

Matthew 18:24, the king, there in that parable represents God. He's like the divine lien holder. He's the divine benefactor, and we're like the servant who owes that lien holder 10,000 talents. A talent, if you're not aware of this, is a measurement of weight. That measurement of weight is a unit that's equal to about 100 pounds. So, whether that's 100 pounds of gold or

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

silver, 100 pounds is 100 pounds. 100 pounds of feathers is 100 pounds. So, if you owe 10,000 units to somebody at 100 pounds each, 100 times 10,000, if my math is right, that's a million. That is one million pounds. That pictures our sins against God as this incredible debt, this unbearable weight.

To forgive. What a word. To forgive is, it's such a relief. It's like turning a relief valve on a, on a canister that's about to explode with pressure. *Aphiemi* is to to let go. All the, all the ways this is translated, just such a relief from this stain and crushing weight of the burden of sin. *Aphiemi* means to let go. It means to, to, send away. It means to cancel. It means to pardon. It means to release and that, all of that, is what God does when he forgives us. Out of his pity, in his mercy, in his compassion, God releases us from the debt. He removes the crushing weight of the guilt of our sins and he casts it away. When he forgives, Isaiah 1:18, "Though our sins are like scarlet", he removes the stain from that fabric and we become, as white as snow. Though our sins are red like crimson, though we're shown to be in the evidence of the stain on our garments, we're shown to be murderers. All those sins become white as wool and that is great news.

That's the news we call the gospel, isn't it? That whoever believes that gospel will not perish, but have everlasting life: If they repent of their sins, and forsake their sins, and put their faith in Christ, who paid for all their sins. That's the good news, the gospel.

And that brings us to our second question. Why do we need forgiveness of our sins, when we've already been justified by God? I mean, why are we praying this prayer, in the first place? I remember back in the nineties, there was a popular radio teacher named Bob George. He wrote a book called *Classic Christianity*.

And among a number of dispensational errors, in that book, that he taught. He taught this, that 1 John 1:9, that is, that precious promise, "that if we confess our sins." Notice the term, we, there? That's John the Apostle writing, and he's writing to his beloved; his children, fathers, and children, and young men in the faith.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

All these are, this, he's writing to a church. If we confess our sins, he, God' is faithful. That is, he will not change his character and he's just. That is every sin gets its due punishment. So, God, "if we confess our sins, he is faithful." That is, he always keeps his promises. He always does what he says. He will always fil, fulfill his word. He's also just: Meaning every sin gets its due punishment. Every crime gets its penalty.

He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to "cleanse us from all unrighteousness." What a promise. If we confess the sins that we know. Well, God is faithful and just, not only to cleanse us from those sins, but also from all other unrighteousness. Things that we don't know. That we're not aware of. You gotta realize how deep your sin goes. How many times in a day you sin and you're completely unaware, you're oblivious to it. Because you're not mature enough to see it. You don't see things the way God does.

Well, this teacher Bob George, he taught that, that precious promise of 1 John 1:9, doesn't apply to us as believers. He said

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

that, if we, as Christians, if we do what 1 John 1:9 says to do, we're essentially rejecting the atoning cross work of Jesus Christ. Now, most of us can't understand why anybody would say that. We, we, recognize that's an error, but not everyone can explain, why that is.

If Bob George is consistent, he'd have to recommend that Jesus disciples should not pray the Lord's prayer. At least this particular petition in the Lord's prayer: Forgive us our sins. We recognize that's ridiculous. Why would Jesus tell his disciples to pray this, if he didn't want them to pray that petition? But why is it ridiculous? What's wrong with it? Well, for those of us who are in Christ, we have, in fact, been freed from the penalty of sin by the perfect, once for all, atoning work of Christ and his death for sins. That is what the Bible refers to as our, the basis of our justification, that God declares us righteous, and that's where we received a full and free pardon from God, for all of our sins, past, present and future.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

And by the way, we standing here today. For, for, us all of our sins, from the standpoint of the cross, all of our sins were future. So, he gave us a full and free pardon for all of our sins. Sins of thought, word, and deed, sins of omission, commission, all of it. And, in addition to that forgiveness, in God's justification, we've, also, received from God the perfect righteousness of Christ himself. Jesus Christ, our representative head. He is the second Adam. He's the progenitor of a new race of people. He fulfilled all that the law required for his chosen people and in him, in Christ, we stand before God, as righteous as Christ himself, by his grace, that happens by the means of imputation.

Imputation, is a, is an accounting term used in Scripture. It means reckoning. It means accounting. Imputation means that God reckons our, our accounts, our sins to Christ and he punishes Christ for our sins, instead of us. So, he takes the debt column, in our, in our ledger on himself, Christ does and he receives the full weight of the wrath of God, for all those sins. And then, imputation also means that God reckons, rewards us with the glory, and the honor, and the blessing that Christ deserves. He reckons or accounts Christ's' righteousness to us

and then he treats us, rewards us as if we were Christ himself. You want a text for that, it's very simple, 2 Corinthians 5:21. You should definitely have this in your memory it's such a good verse for evangelizing the lost.

Paul puts this succinctly, there, he says, "God made him who knew no sin." Only one qualifies. It's Jesus. "God made him who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in him." That tells us how justification can happen legally. How God can justify the ungodly and still remain just. Still remain a just judge. It happens by this gracious work of imputation as he reckons our sins to Christ and he maintains his justice, because every sin gets punished. He doesn't let one sin go. And then he reckons Christ righteousness to us. That's an act of grace. He's not obligated in his grace. He can give freely and willingly, and he does. He treats each of us according to that manner of reckoning, of reckoning, Christ righteousness to us, and rewarding us.

So, if that's the case with us, if everything is forgiven, if we have a full and free pardon, then why do we still need to

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

confess our sins? As John tells us in 1 John 1:9, why do we still need to pray, as Jesus tells us to pray, in Luke 11:4, forgive us our sins. We pray that petition. We seek forgiveness, because although we've been freed from the eternal penalty of sin, we still live in the reality of the presence of sin.

This, here what's described here, what's described in the 1 John 1:9, what's described in other text as well. This is for the one who has already counted a child of God by adoption. This is, this is for that child of God who has violated the relational rules of the family. This is, this is about someone who's in the family, yes, but they've disobeyed the rules of the house.

This judicial, this is about a fatherly pardon, not a judicial pardon. Judicial pardon has already been granted, and "There is, therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus," Romans 8:1. We no longer stand before God, the judge. Because, because of Christ, we stand in Christ, and we are related to God as our father. We are in the family now. So, Luke 11:4, has to do with the gracious privilege of family

GRACE CHURCH



Greeley

membership. It has to do with the offer of our loving father to reconcile us back to himself, as his erring children, he's going to bring us back into his bosom.

This is, this is our way back into the loving arms of the father that we've offended. And beloved, this should, it must promote humility in us, whenever we pray. Whenever we offer this petition to God. Does anyone, does anyone not imagine he doesn't sin daily against God in some way. Anyone imagine she has no sins in her day in thought, or word, or deed; sins of omission, Commission.

You need to realize this as Christians. Our sins are worse, because when we sin, we sin against the light of truth that we know. We sin against the one that we now call father. So when we sin, we're sinning against our own nature. As born-again children of God, we were sinning against the indwelling Holy Spirit. We're sinning against the Christ who died for our sins. We're sinning against the father in his paternal love for us. We're spurning his fatherly compassion. We desperately need to be restored. And it's not for God's sake. He sees everything

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

clearly. It's for our sake. Praise be to God that when we do come to him and we ask for his forgiveness, our father offers to forgive us. He offers to forgive us from a fatherly heart of compassion.

Listen, this is no minor issue. Our continued growth in holiness, our pursuit of sanctification depends on us having a right relationship with our father. If we're not forgiven in this way, if we're not restored back into fellowship, then we are stunting our own growth. We're throwing a huge stumbling block in our path as we move forward.

Imagine a runner competing. He's running in a race on a track, around a track, and instead of staying in his lane, instead of running on the path of least resistance, on the smooth concrete path, he veers off course and he runs on uneven grass. He, run, his running spikes are getting all gummed up in, the, the grass and the mud, his ankles get twisted, his knees buckle, his legs twisted. And, eventually, he keeps doing that, putting out that effort, he's going to fall down flat, isn't he? He has to run that race again. He's got to get up, he's got to unclog the

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

spikes, he's got to move back into his lane, and he's got to start running again, and beloved, that is the fatherly pardon: To run again, to be cleaned off.

When Jesus came in the upper room to his disciples. He told them, "I wanna wash your feet." Peter said, "Oh no. No Lord, you're never gonna wash my feet." He said, "Peter, if I don't wash your feet you have no part in me." He said, well, okay, then wash my, give me a bath. I mean, give me a shower. Cover the whole thing. He says, No. No, I've already made you clean, by the word I've spoken to you. It's your feet that are the problem. They continue to go out and get dirty, as you walk around the world. Let me wash your feet.

That's what this is, it's fatherly pardon. The restoration that he gives us to come back to the family table; to participate in family worship and fellowship and this is the restoration that Jesus is talking about here. This is the loving compassion that he wants us to know, that he wants us to experience, when he tells us to petition the father for forgiveness, in this verse and this is a special grace and it's one that's for family

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

members only. This is what restores us back to full fellowship. This is what clears our consciences. This is what settles our hearts in his love and fills us with peace and contentment. We truly belong to him.

Now, we come now to this matter of a, a stated condition, that we need to forgive others; to be restored by the fatherly forgiveness of God and this takes us into our second heading for today. Number two: Becoming meek people who resemble God.

Becoming meek people who resemble God. Let's think more carefully about that. This third question we asked, Does, does God make his fatherly pardon conditional? In other words, does God withhold restoring us back into his fellowship, if we withhold forgiveness from others? Answer. Yes, he does. God withholds his blessing, if we refuse to, give other, forgive others.

He withholds his blessing, if we refuse to forgive others and that's exactly what this verse is saying. This is not talking about those who are ignorant of the need to forgive. This isn't talking about someone who forgives and then, in weakness and

frailty remembers that offense that happened in the past and becomes hurt all over again and struggles through the process of forgiveness, repeatedly over and over. This isn't talking about that.

This is talking about someone who refuses to forgive altogether. Someone who bears a grudge. Someone who has a critical spirit and holds that bitterness. Cherishes it. Relishes it. Pets it. Helps it to grow. And we pray, forgive us our sins in verse 4, "For," because, "we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us."

Matthew 6:12, Jesus said the same thing there. On that occasion, the Sermon on the Mount, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." What's the assumption, there? We forgive those indebted to us, period. We forgive all of our debtors. That is the basis of our appeal. Whenever we make this petition, namely that we forgive others. We share the heart of the father we're appealing to.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

Forgiveness, forgiveness of others is the badge of authenticity, that we present to the father. Forgiving others is the seal of our adoption. Forgiving others is the family trait. That's the genetic code that comes out. Forgiving others is the chief feature on the family crest. As Jesus said in the sermon on the Mount, we're to "be merciful, even as our father is merciful," Luke 6:36.

In fact, I'd like to take a look at Luke 6, again. That's the sermon on the Mount that Luke records. Back in Luke 6 and maybe starting in verse 27, Luke 6:27. This is a remarkable portion of Scripture, that is truly humbling, if you really think through the different phrases here.

Jesus said, "I say to you who hear, love your enemies." Wow, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. The one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, from one who takes away your cloak. Do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, from the one who," takes away from your,

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

"takes away your goods, don't demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, you do so to them."

Keep reading, "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount. But love your enemies and do good. Lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil."

Wow, how, how in the world can we love like that? How do we do that? That is other worldly? That is, that requires a superhuman, supernatural virtue working within us, that is exactly the power by the spirit that is working in the children of God. What is the first fruit of the spirit? Galatians 5:22, "love", and it's this kind of love.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

Let's keep reading, verse 36, Luke 6, "Be merciful even as your father is merciful. Judge not, and you will not be judged. Condemn not, you will not be condemned; forgive and you will be forgiven; give and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure that you use it will be measured back to you."

Listen, if we're not merciful to those who wrong us, who are, who violate us morally and ethically, then, if we're not merciful to those people, we are out of step with the one that we call father. How can we expect him to forgive us, if we fail to forgive others and we've refused to forgive them? "Forgive," Jesus said, "You will be forgiven."

God will be magnanimous. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together: He's talking about going to the market to buy grain and that, that, that, that, the seller of the grain takes the grain and puts it in, in good measure. That is sound measure. He presses it down, shakes it so that he can get more in there and he keeps on piling on, until it's running over and spilling over and then he pours that into your lap. Believe me, you cannot out

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

give God. You cannot out forgive God and when you forgive, you are most like God, because God is a God who forgives.

Now let me state this very, very clearly, lest you mistake my meaning. Our forgiving others, that's not the basis of our forgiveness, but it is the condition of our forgiveness. Christ, and Christ alone is the basis of our forgiveness. He is the ground of our justification. His work is the ground of our justification, but once we are justified, the proof of our justification is that we forgive others and when we forgive others, that is the condition of God receiving us back to himself.

So, if we do not forgive others, if we don't receive, release them from their debt of obligation to us, we can be sure, we will not be restored back into fellowship with our father, when we've sinned against him. We will not have his fatherly love, his blessing. Which by the way, we sin daily. We sometimes sin hourly. Sometimes, even more than that.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

If you don't recognize, how you sin daily against God, you need to see that as a sign of your spiritual dullness, not strength. You need to see that as a sign of your spiritual insensitivity, your immaturity, on your part, not, not your strength and your maturity. You're not strong spiritually, if you don't sense any sin against God. You're weak. If you don't see the depth and the breadth of your sins against a thrice holy God, you're not seeing things clearly.

Isaiah himself, when he faced a holy God, he fell down on his knees and he said, "I am undone. I'm a man of unclean lips. I live among the people of unclean lips." He saw himself clearly. By God's grace, as you grow in spiritual maturity, you'll be like Isaiah. You'll see as God sees. You'll discern as he discerns and the gospel will, to you, become even more precious, because he's accepted you, even, even in spite of the depth of your sin. You're a trophy of his grace.

Beloved, I think there are too many of us who take the failure to forgive sins, as a relatively minor offense. That ought not to be, it's not a minor offense, it's a major offense, when

people refuse to forgive other people, that's one that hinders our relationship with God and if that goes on, that, that hinders and prevents our growth in holiness. It robs us of blessing. It opens us up to further temptation and more, and more sin that becomes blinding. It's like not just a log sticking out of our eyeball, whole forests coming out of our eye sockets and not only that, but speaking very frankly, Jesus acknowledges this. The failure to forgive may be an indication that someone does not belong to God, at all.

This is not a minor issue. Back, to see this, turn back to Matthew Chapter 18. I know you're probably familiar with this text, but it is worth reading, in this context. Matthew 18:21. Matthew 18 is the chapter on receiving little children and not being the cause of any of God's children, of stumbling. It's about restoring a sinning brother back into fellowship.

Thinking through. Hear what Jesus just said about restoring. Restoring an offending brother. Peter posed a question here. Matthew 18:21, Peter came up, said to Jesus, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me and I forgive him as many as

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

seven times?" Being, he thinks he's being magnanimous there, being very broad, very liberal in his forgiveness.

Jesus said to him, verse 22, "I do not say to you seven times but seventy times seven." That caught him off, all off, guard. Jesus is saying you keep on forgiving. He's not asking him to do math, there, he's, and, and keep accounts, he's saying you keep forgiving. He's, he's doubling down here, in the next, in the next verses.

Take a look at verse 23, "Therefore the Kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants, and when he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him 10,000 talents." There it is, one million pounds of weight and since he could not pay, of course he couldn't pay, his master ordered him to be sold with his wife and children and all that he had and payment to be made.

Servant fell on his knees, imploring him, "Have patience with me. I will pay you everything." That's, that's not true. He's not gonna pay him any, he can't pay that, that 10,000 talents.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

He's pleading. He's begging. Out of pity, verse 27, as pity for him, the master of that servant, released him and forgave him the debt.

When that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him 100 denarii, a pittance. And he seized him, began to choke him, saying, "Pay what you owe." His servant fell down. Pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, I'll pay you." He refused; he went; put him in debtors' prison, until he should pay the debt and when his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed. They went and reported to their master, all that had taken place.

His master summoned him and said to him, "You wicked servant. I forgave you all that debt, because you pleaded with me. Did you not have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had with you?" That's exactly what he's saying to us. You want me to forgive you, forgive others. In anger, his master delivered him to the jailiers, jailers until he should pay all his debt. So, also, my heavenly father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother, not just externally, but from the heart.

Wow. Why beloved? Why would any of us consider a refusal to forgive? To be a minor thing in God's sight. Struggle to forgive. Sure. I understand that. We all struggle to forgive at times. But you know where we're struggling. We're struggling to forgive. It's got a positive orientation toward forgiveness. Toward releasing the bitterness. Releasing that person. But a refusal to forgive, that is not Christian behavior.

Every true Christian will find his way to forgive the debts of others, because God has forgiven our 10,000 talents of weight. Scarlet sins of debt. Again, Jesus teaches us to pray as his disciples, "Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us." We need to recognize, whenever we fail, at whatever point of the law we sin, we owe God an unpayable debt, which, is, it has an internal price for us to pay in hell. That's our debtor's prison.

By infinite contrast, we need to acknowledge that any debt anyone owes us all those things are minor debts. They are a pittance. We recognize our greater sins against God. The minor

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

debts of others sins against us. They are inconsequential and they are to be disregarded completely. As to the weight of offense, listen, praying this petition, daily seeking forgiveness from God, daily releasing the offenses of others against us, this trains us in keeping with our heading. This trains us to be meek people. This teaches us to be unassuming Christians, to be gracious with other people with their faults.

Beloved, if God has forgiven you, you get to practice the joy of forgiving others. You get to practice the joy of opening the cage and letting them out. Letting them free. You don't have to hold it in any longer. This becomes our plea, "for we ourselves forgive everyone who's indebted to us," Lord. We say, Lord, I'm willing to forgive the debt of those who cannot repay a debt to me. I know it's a minor thing, but will you not forgive me? When Christ has paid it all. That's our plea. It's the plea of a humble, meek hearted saint.

And this brings us to our, our, final petition, number 5: which also promotes meekness. Jesus said, "When you pray, say Father, lead us not into temptation." We have more, one more question to

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

answer. One that we raised at the beginning: Does, does, the father ever lead his children into temptation? I mean why would we even pray, a prayer like that, when our father is good and gracious and kind? He's not, he's not soliciting temptation out of us, is he? Well, to put it simply. One way you can look at this is, this is a sort of a Hebraism, a manner of, a Hebrew manner of expression, that emphasizes our concern for holiness by stating the petition in starkly negative terms, and so contrary to the fact, that the opposite is meant.

So, when we pray, Lord "lead us not into temptation," we're actually saying, with strong emphasis, Lord lead me into holiness. Get me away from temptation. Take me to holiness, sinless perfection, and purity. That's what I long for. Help me resist all temptation. So, there's a humility here. There's a, a spirit of meekness in this final petition, that recognizes, that our future steps, we're praying that they be heavenward, that they'd be walking by the spirit, never by the flesh, that we're pursuing Christ likeness, that were pursuing holiness.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

We pray daily for our next steps. Not doubting that God wants us to walk in holiness, but acknowledging our own tendency to fall short. Confessing to him our need. Confessing our, our weakness, our propensity for following after temptation, for being enticed by stupid, feudal, sinful things. While at the same time, we're confessing to him, our deepest longing and desire, which is to be like him.

Our longing is expressed by James. He kind of puts this together, in a little bit of theology, in James chapter 1. He says, in James 1:12, "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promise to those who love him."

So, James is recognizing, in that verse, that a man who goes through trial, he's going through trial because God has put him through trial. Is God tempting him? No. God is testing him. God is putting him through a test to refine him. To strengthen him. That's what he does. That's what smelters do with metals, precious metals. They take gold, put it in the fire, turn up the heat, and let all that impurity come to the surface. Scrape it

GRACE CHURCH



Grace

off, that that gold may be refined, and that's exactly what God does to us. "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under that trial. When he stood the test, he's going to receive the crown of life, which God has promise to those who love him."

Then, James says this, verses 13 to 14, James chapter 1, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I'm being tempted by God.'" No. "God cannot be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one." He has nothing to do with temptation. "Each person is tempted when he's lured and enticed by his own desire" and "Then desire when it's conceived gives birth to sin, sin when it's fully grown, brings forth death."

Oh, we're children of life, and light, and truth. We want nothing to do with death. And so that's what this prayer is saying. Lead me not into temptation. Don't let me fall into that process. Don't let me slip down that slope. We get that, don't we? We understand that. We pray with David, at the end of Psalm 19. Rejoicing in the word of God, he prayed, "Declare me innocent from hidden faults, Lord, keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then

GRACE CHURCH



Grace

I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and even deeper, the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer." That's this prayer, "Lead us not into temptation."

Again, we pray with David, Psalm 139:23, "Search me O God, and know my heart, try me." Test me, know my thoughts is what he's saying there. So, turn up the heat. Bring on the trials. Bring on the test. Bring on the affliction. Bring it Lord, because I want you to see. I want, my thoughts to be exposed. I want to see if there be any grievous way in me and I want it gone, so that I can be led by you in the way of everlasting.

Listen, those are the prayers of a humble, broken, contrite, meek, saint of God, who longs for holiness. Beloved, when this body dies. Whether it's from virus. Whether it's an untimely accident. Whether it's being mobbed at the store by people who are after toilet paper, and tuna, and all the rest. We will know immediately where we stand with God, won't we? We'll answer to him for our life upon this earth.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

If you're not in Christ, then you are called before the pure and holy one. You'll be in his presence. You'll be there, stained and defiled. And you are not going to be able to stand before him at all. You'll be bowed down before him. Not just in view of his glory, but because you'd be weighted down with the crushing guilt of your sin. That burden of one million pounds of your debt.

That debt, that will drown you beneath the sea of God's holy wrath and will pin you down forever in an eternal fiery hell. But if you come to Christ. If you're found in Christ. Then your sins are atoned for, your debt is paid. Ever, ever wonder why men, like David, are recorded for us in scripture, with all of his failures. His greatness, but, also, his failures, as well.

That's God's promise of comfort to you. That your sins are not beyond his mercy. No sins of yours are too dreadful, to be beyond God's grace. If God has forgiven you, he looks upon you, as if you'd never sinned. He, he, sends your sins into an oblivion and he remembers them no more. He removes, forever, the

threat of his perfect holy wrath and more than that, if he's forgiven you, he's also bestowed on you, his righteousness.

He's imputed to you, the very righteousness of Christ, his beloved son, and that means, if God has forgiven you, your conscience has no more authority to accuse you. There is nothing left in heaven and on Earth; nothing that can hurt you, nothing of which you need to be afraid. You're in Christ and Christ is your champion, and then he becomes the goal of your life. The upward goal. The upward call of God, in Christ Jesus, to live as Christ.

With the sting of death removed, we can face death with hope, with joy, that the Christian death is gain; the very worst becomes our very best. Now, anything short of death in this life, any affliction, any trial, any pain, any suffering any sorrow, God has commissioned all of those, as his servants, for your good. They're tools to chisel you, to refine you. They're heat, that turns up the heat and purifies and refines you. Even the loss of some of the most painful loss, in life, is to lose

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

dear loved ones, but even those losses, become gentle reminders of God's grace, and his loving kindness, and comfort.

I love this: What Thomas Watson wrote, he said, "God has taken away, thy child, thy husband. But he's also taken away thy sins. He's given thee more than he hath taken away. He hath taken away a flower and given thee a jewel. He has given thee Christ, and the spirit, and thee earnest of glory. He hath given thee more than he has taken away." Isn't that precious?

If God has forgiven you, all things serve your growth and holiness, all things sanctify you, so that you might not sin, that you might serve, the honor and the glory of God, dignified as a servant of the king. And you're now authorized to come before him, to come before God in humble boldness, not only as a servant, to this great king, but as a child comes to his father.

Since your sin's been removed, separated as far as the east is from the west, God never brings up your former sins. He never chastises you. He never makes you feel them. Instead, he covers them over. He atones for your sins and he welcomes you with

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

loving arms, like the father of the prodigal, covers you with his, his own garment, puts the ring on your hand. He sacrifices the calf and he says, come, and he kisses your face, invites you then to pray, calling him father and learning his perfect will. He wants you to grow in humility and meekness, that he might bless you more, and more, and more.

Bow with me for word of prayer. Our father, this, this text, which is, in our order of, of, exposition of Luke's Gospel, seems to be so apropos for this time. You've ordered this. You have given us what's important on this Lord's Day. And a, and a Lord's Day that we find it strange, because we cannot meet as we want to. As we long to. We pray for a soon restoration of the gathered body, the church, the assembly of the saints. That we might rejoice together in song, and praise, and in prayers.

That we might have mutual edification in each one of us stirring up and provoking one another's love and good works, and mutually edifying, and growing each other in our faith. But while we are at home and separated from one another, we do pray that what we've learned from Luke 11:4 would be such a gracious

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

encouragement from you, but provoke our holiness. Make us humble people and make us meek people. Let us never hold grudges. Let us always be eager to forgive and to let things go. But as always, be pursuing holiness, because we love you, we want to be a people purified, zealous for good works, that we might bring all glory and honor to you, in the name of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. It's in his name that we pray, amen.