

Forgive Us Our Debts
Sermon - July 11, 2021

As we are studying the Lord's Prayer, we reached one of the prayers, which makes us very humble. The original word ὀφειλήματα opheilēmata in our prayer is translated in three different ways: sin, debts or trespasses. Last Sunday we focused on the most common translation: Forgive us our sin. Our God was challenging us with quite a few questions, and after a week we should review how we answered the homework our heavenly father was asking us to do.

- Were we able to forgive each other, when the other person apologized?
- Were we able to forgive even in those situations when the other person did not apologize?
- Did we go to bed with anger or were we able to forgive each other everything?
- Were we able to get rid of any kind of bitterness, hurt, and pain caused by a person, and were we able to start every morning anew?
- Did we forgive the sins, as we would like our heavenly Father to forgive us?

Today we are focusing on this Greek word ὀφειλήματα opheilēmata as debts.

The Bible says that we are the children of a loving Heavenly Father, who is rich in grace. As our daily bread is provided by his grace, our daily forgiveness is provided also. But only those can receive it who are asking for it and who are thankful for God's forgiveness, and who can forgive others in the same way as God forgave them.

The Bible says that we are debtors. We did not give God what is His. At the end of the Lord's Prayer, we pray that Thine is the GLORY, but we are short to give God's GLORY. Instead of glorifying Him and giving Him thanks for everything that we have, what we received, what the Lord has done for us, we keep the glory for us.

There is a well known Latin sentence, originated from John Calvin: "For Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the Glory forever." SOLI DEO GLORIA – To God be the glory alone."

Dear beloved, let us ask ourselves: as God's children, are we able to give the glory to God alone?

Once I was listening to a person's report about his success as he highlighted the ways he succeeded in his life. He said: "I was great doing these plans. And of course, God helped me as well."

Are we able to confess that To God is the glory alone, or do we want to share this glory with God, saying that God, You are great but the glory after my success is MINE, or maybe OURS.

Once I overheard a conversation between a child and her mother as they were walking hand in hand. The little sweet girl said to her mom: Mom, I am sure you walk safer since I am holding your hand. This is how sometimes we picture ourselves holding God's hand, and we give ourselves glory for all we have done or we succeeded.

Secondly, in Ten Commandments our Lord says: "*Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.*" (Exodus 20:8) Holy means to spend it with the Lord in His holiness.

I do know that some people have to work even on Sundays, but there is still a way to keep it holy if we really want to spend time with our Lord. Remember, how we spent Sundays here in Canada 30-40 years ago, when stores were closed, and we focused on worship and family time. It is a shame how we destroyed our Sunday, and the families. Today, there is no time to give God glory and there is no time for families to be together, at least on Sundays.

Because we did not give our God His glory, we became debtors. We kept for ourselves what we should give Him.

Let's picture God now standing in front of us with an endless list, which tells us how much we own Him. That is our debts list. We did not give Him thanks, we did not give him honour, we did not forgive others, although God forgave us, we were not patient with others although the Lord was patient with us; we did not share the gifts God gave us to give further to those who were hungry or thirsty or suffered in many other ways. We did not do what God was expecting us to do, and for this we are debtors. God fills both of our hands with those receipts, which we did not pay off.

In Victorian times, if somebody could not pay his or her debts, that person was sent to debtor's prison until the debt was paid.

Let's see what the Bible says about our debts.

“When you were dead in your sins, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; He has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.”

(Colossians 2:13-14) God did not want us to be punished because of our debts; God did not want us to die. Jesus Christ came into this world to take from you your debts receipts, and he nailed those to the cross.

Dear beloved, we have to take it seriously, that our debts are way above our heads, they are covering us, and we will never have a way to pay God for what we own Him for all his loving care, for all we committed against His glory.

As I was working many years ago in my first congregation, there was a special way to nullify receipts. There was a dangerous nail, and I had to pierce them. As the receipts were pierced, they were not valid anymore.

In the Scripture, we read that Jesus Christ asked God to give him our debt receipts, and Jesus Christ nailed them to the cross, saying: for all these I paid. And this is why we can, and we have to, come to God daily asking for forgiveness.

Let us be thankful and let us rejoice that Jesus Christ paid, with his life and death pain, for all our debts, and we are debt free.

Based on the Bible, only those people are called BELIEVERS, who do believe and confess, that on the cross our Lord Jesus Christ paid for all our debts. Those are true believers, who believe that when our Lord Jesus Christ said his last words in agony on the cross, IT IS DONE, then He paid the whole amount of our debts. Those who can share their faith with joy with others, and can confess how they became debt-free, are called BELIEVERS. We can rejoice, knowing that as debt-free, we will enter into the glory of God.

At this point, somebody could raise another question: if we were forgiven 2,000 years ago, why do we still have to ask God for forgiveness?

At that point when we accepted Jesus Christ in our lives and we embraced Him as the crucified Lord, who died to pay off our debts, and we started a new life, in which we serve and glorify Him, we are not perfect yet. We still make mistakes. Making mistakes is part of our human nature. Probably we don't make as big mistakes as before, but we still sin, we still do things against God's sanctity, and we still mess up every day.

Just as we have to shower every day and clean up our body, we also have to wash off our spirit from our sin. We have to go daily to our Father, and we have to ask for His forgiveness because we do something against Him daily.

If we experience the joy of being forgiven, then it will be easier for us to forgive others, to forget about their sin, about their debt.

What do we have to do with other people's debts?

Often, I am totally shocked when I hear that some people were not able to forgive their loved ones once for years or decades. They still remember what they did, how bad they were, or what they said against them.

I picture these people having all those debt receipts in their hands. And because both hands are full with those receipts, they cannot receive God's love letter, in which God would say: I forgave your debts. Go with peace.

Dear beloved, today we can go forward buried by the receipts which contain our debts towards God, or we can bring them all to Jesus, to be nailed to the cross. We can walk away holding other people's debts list, or we can forgive them and we can accept God's love letter: As you forgave others debts, I forgave yours. Go with peace.

Once, a minister had a conversation with a person discussing the importance of forgiveness, which impacts not only our psychological well-being but our physical body. At one moment, she said: OK, I forgive him, but I don't want to see him anymore. The minister told her that means that she did NOT really forgive him from the bottom of her heart.

Let's make a decision today that we will forgive everybody who was hurting us in the past, and we start a new page with them. This has to be a strong decision. I am not talking here about sensitivity. The sensitive wounds heal very slowly. I am talking about a straight decision. I forgive, and I will never recall the stories. Although it is still hurting, I will try not to remember the way I was hurt.

This is how we should come not to our Heavenly Father, praying to forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, knowing that our debts are nailed to the cross. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord oh, my soul. Amen.