

# **The Importance of Forgiveness**

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As we prepare for Jesus' second coming, we are faced with making some very important decisions and actions regarding forgiveness: There are two aspects of forgiveness:

- 1) repenting, asking for forgiveness and making restitution, and
- 2) forgiving and showing mercy to others.

This message will cover the second of these aspects, and perhaps we can do the other part at a later time.

Shall we bow our heads for prayer one more time?

## **1. Matthew 5:48**

Be ye perfect even as your father which is in heaven is perfect.

**What is perfection?** A rich young ruler approached Jesus and asked him, What do I need to do to inherit eternal life?

## **2. Matthew 19:21**

Jesus said unto him, if you would be perfect, go and sell all you have and give to the poor and you shall have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

## **3. Luke 6:35-36**

Love your enemies and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and you shall be the children of the Highest, **for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.**

## **4. Matthew 5:7**

Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy.

Today I want to focus on *Christ's* teaching on forgiveness.

**Would you repeat with me the Lord's Prayer as found in Matthew?**

## **5. Matthew 6:9-13**

Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

## **6. Matthew 6:14-15**

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses

## **7. Mark 11:24-25**

therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.

## **8. Matthew 18:21-24**

<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

<sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.<sup>23</sup> Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.<sup>24</sup> And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.

## 9. Matthew 18:25-28

<sup>25</sup> But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. <sup>26</sup> The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' <sup>27</sup> Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

<sup>28</sup> "But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took *him* by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!'

## 10. Matthew 18:29-32

<sup>29</sup> So his fellow servant fell down at his feet<sup>[a]</sup> and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'<sup>[b]</sup><sup>30</sup> And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. <sup>31</sup> So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. <sup>32</sup> Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.

## 11. Matthew 18:33-35

<sup>33</sup> Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' <sup>34</sup> And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

<sup>35</sup> "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.

### Reinstatement of the debt

This is what a lot of Christians don't seem to get. I have never heard a sermon on what I'm going to share, but it is very important. It will shift your thinking towards forgiveness.

Note what the King did. He **reinstated** the debt to the debtor he had earlier forgiven! The King was angry and delivered him to **who?** the tormentors until he should pay all that was owed him. And then Jesus emphasizes, "so will my Father do to you if you don't forgive your brother **from your heart!**"

## 12. 2 Corinthians 5:10-11

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.* Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

Revelation 20 shares more details on the judgment, and how all who have not been saved and participated in the first resurrection will be judged and thrown into the lake of fire, which is the second death. I'm not going to go into detail on the judgment, but you can read it for yourself in Revelation chapter 20.

But let me make the point: **ALL who are not saved will have their sins reinstated to them** and they will have to pay the penalty **in full** for the sins committed while they were alive. I don't know about you friends, but if I have the choice of accepting Jesus' forgiveness of my sins and eternal life, or paying the penalty in full for my own sins, then I'd rather take Jesus' love and the eternal life option! How about you?

So let's look carefully at what Jesus says we need to do to make that happen with regards to forgiveness.

### How do you feel when you are forgiven?

We love grace when it applies to us. We love forgiveness when it applies to our sins. We love mercy when it applies to us. But how do we treat others who sin or trespass against us?

What does Romans 5:8 say? "... while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

**Who reaches out first?** God does. Christ does, the Father does!

We know that Christ forgives sins. JESUS is the great Initiator, HE is the great Lover, HE is our great example. Christ forgives us first. **Then** He expects us as His disciples and followers to copy or emulate Him. Let me make that stronger), He REQUIRES us to copy or emulate Him? He requires us to pass the love along, pass the forgiveness along, pass the mercy along.

In Jesus' parable, what did the KING do *first* to the debtor who owed him 10,000 talents? He forgave him FIRST!

Some will say, I will forgive, but I will never forget? Is this true forgiveness? Is this the type of conditional forgiveness God offers us?

### **13. Psalms 103:8-12**

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide neither will he keep his anger forever. He has not dealt with us after our sins: nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens is high above the earth, so great is his mercy towards them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

### **14. Psalms 103:17-18**

but the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him and on to his righteousness unto his children's children, to such as keep his covenant and to those who remember his commandments to do them.

Jesus said, as you forgive others, so will my Father do to you. Do you really want to hold back on your forgiveness?

Before we go further, let me address abuse or being with a toxic person. Forgiveness does not mean allowing yourself to be continually exposed to harm if you can help it. Forgiveness does not mean that you allow yourself to be disrespected or abused. It does not mean that you remain in contact with those who continue to seek your harm or to slander you. It does not mean that you don't take steps to prevent or correct the sin against you.

There are times when change is needed. Jesus gives guidance on this as well.

### **15. Matthew 18:15-17**

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or tax collector.

And in the time of Jesus, pagan and tax collectors were ostracized, shunned, avoided. Jesus said, do what you can and then move on!

Forgiveness and mercy means releasing your mind from harboring a grudge against these individuals. It means releasing any right that you might have to vengeance or restitution, rather leaving that to God's hand.

What did God say?

### **16. Hebrews 10:30**

For we know him that has said, vengeance belongs to me. I will repay says the LORD. And again, the LORD shall judge his people.

### **17. Deuteronomy 32:35**

To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense. Their foot shall slide in due time

You may have heard it said,

*“Unforgiveness is a poison the victim drinks hoping it will hurt his or her offender.”*

Why is that? Unforgiveness creates in us a chronic stressful state. The body releases adrenaline and then cortisol. With the body continually bathed in these fight or flight hormones, they attack the heart and our blood vessels. It causes the bones and skin to deteriorate. It reduces immune system function and we become more prone to disease, especially cancer. Research done by Purdue University scientists discovered that constant worrying shortens one’s life span by an amazing 16 years! Worrying, negativism, pessimism, unforgiveness, bitterness, anger and resentment, all have a similar affect. It ages you and shortens your life *dramatically!* In fact, it shortens it more than smoking, more than eating an unhealthful diet, more than lack of exercise!

In Luke 12:25 in the newer translations, Jesus said, “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?” (NIV). Worrying not only *cannot* add to your years, but it subtracts heavily from your life!

Unforgiveness makes one long for revenge. Yet even if you are successful in causing pain to the one who hurt you, it is never enough. Unforgiveness saps away the enjoyment of life, and fills one with bitterness, anger and resentment. But the biggest thing is that it separates us from God. It separates us from the source of joy, peace and life; it separates us from health and in the long run: eternal life.

Satan knows this. He does everything he can to cause us pain. Because he knows that every unforgiven pain is a chink in the fortress of our soul that his demonic agencies can use to get into our lives. Every unforgiven pain can lead to bitterness, anger and resentment. The Holy Spirit cannot dwell in someone with those characteristics.

### **18. 3 John 1:2**

Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health even as your soul prospers.

See, there is an order. Your soul prospers first, THEN your health and finances prospers.

### **19. Ephesians 4:32**

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God also in Christ forgave you.

Some people say forgiveness is a process. I respectfully disagree. **When God is involved**, true forgiveness is a momentary event; it’s an instant in time. It is transformative. It is healing. How long do you want the healing to take place? Over a long period of time, or instantly. If you want it instantly, then forgive completely instantly. This is miraculous, this is spiritual, this is God-initiated.

### **20. John 14:27**

Peace I leave with you. my peace I give unto you. Not as the world gives, give I to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

## 21. Matthew 11:28-30

Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

**Let me share my story:** I love my wife dearly, but as we have quite opposite personality traits, we often have our differences. I won't go into details as to causes, but suffice to say there have been many times when I have been deeply hurt by things she has done or said, and I'm sure the opposite is true as well. There is an annual religious convocation where I used to live called campmeeting. Thousands of people attend, listening to speakers delivering inspiring messages and the music can be uplifting. It goes for 4 days, and many people camp in tents or RVs there. At one of those meetings, the hurt that I felt was so deep that I felt deeply separated from my wife, and unfortunately also from God. Remember what I said about unforgiveness separating us from the Father? Here I was sitting in the middle of a large religious convocation and I didn't feel anything spiritually. I was shocked to find myself thinking that I didn't care whether I would be saved or not. Can you imagine that, how horrific that was?

I remember walking from the meeting, wondering why I didn't care. Suddenly, I felt the Holy Spirit give me a distinct impression, "I can't hear your prayers when you harbor unforgiveness in your heart." "I can't reach you when you harbor bitterness, anger and resentment".

## 22. 1 Peter 3:7

Likewise husbands, live with your wives according to knowledge giving honor to the wife as unto the weaker vessel and as being heirs together of the grace of life that your prayers be not hindered.

I immediately prayed in my heart, asking God to forgive me for my unforgiveness and I forgave my wife as well. The results were immediate! Transformational! The communication lines were open again! God put a love in my heart and we were reconciled, my wife and I -- and God and I.

Is there someone you need to forgive? Is there someone close to you that you are holding something against? Is there someone you need to be reconciled to? Do not wait for them to come to you. **Never relegate your happiness to someone who you feel has harmed you.**

Some of you need to make a list, a list of people who have hurt you. **Who are those most likely to have hurt you?** Were these people who were closest to you? your husband, wife or an ex-husband or ex-wife, parents, children, boss, fellow employees, classmates, teachers, church members, your pastor?

My list was 3 pages long of text in standard 12-point font. If you are not sure who to add to your list, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you who you need to forgive. Write it down.

Then kneel down in humility and respect before the Father, and present that list to the LORD. What did Jesus say? Forgive them from your heart. Tell the LORD you forgive them. Don't dwell on the pain. If you have a splinter, you are not going to pull it out slowly, lingering over every millimeter of the splinter. No, yank it out. Tag and go. Move on from person to person recognizing what God has done for you, what Jesus has done for you, and doing the same thing for them.

After you get up from your knees, you should feel a large burden has fallen off of you. If not, then over the next few days as it settles in, you will feel a bounce in your step, a lightness in your heart that says, a miracle happened, the miracle of forgiveness. It should reflect in the smile on your face.

Then to the greatest extent possible, tell those on your list that you forgive them.

When you truly forgive, you give up your right to harm the one who hurt you. You give up your right to seek restitution, and in return, you let the LORD reward you with joy, peace and life eternal. If you are married, you give up the right to bring that sin or error up to your spouse in the middle of a fight. If you bring it up again to hurt your spouse, you have not truly forgiven and you are treading on very dangerous ground. How so? Jesus said, "As you forgive others, so my Father will do unto you." Ask forgiveness from your spouse for bringing it back up and God also. And never do it again!

To the greatest extent possible, be reconciled. Who knows but they may be transformed by the Christian love you show them. What did Jesus say? "Love one another! By this shall all men know that you are my disciples." (John 13:35)

If you are not sure how the other person might take your forgiveness, try anyways and see what the LORD may do for you and them. If you not sure, present your confusion, your questions to God and let Him guide you.

Let's recap some points from today:

1. Those who cannot emulate our merciful God and forgive their fellow man or woman, will have their debts, their sins reinstated to them. They will pay the penalty in full in the lake of fire. Thus forgiveness of others is essential for our salvation.
2. Unforgiveness is a sin that separates us from God and can hinder our prayers. Satan tries to cause us pain so if we harbor bitterness, anger and resentment, his demons can use those as stepping stones into our lives. Get rid of the unforgiveness and reduce Satan's hold on you!
3. Forgiveness is essential for good health and a long life. Unforgiveness reduces immune system function and leads to chronic sickness and premature aging.
4. Forgiveness is essential for emotional, physical and spiritual healing, joy and peace.

If Jesus commands us to forgive others, then He enables us to do that.

### **23. Matthew 11:28-30**

Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

### **24. Matthew 16:24**

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

### **25. Luke 23:34**

Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.

### **26. Matthew 7:21-23**

Not everyone who says to me Lord Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!

Jesus says, Away from me, you unforgiving people! Away from me those of you who harbor bitterness, anger and resentment! But welcome to those who are merciful, who are loving, kind and gracious.

Do you want God to know you? Do you want to have a relationship with God? Do you want God to say to you, “Well done thou good and faithful servant? Enter into the joy of the LORD?”

**Then be merciful and forgiving, even as your Father in heaven is merciful and forgiving.**

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**For a congregation:**

Have an altar call, a call to forgive others, so that the Father may forgive you. So that nothing may stand between you and Jesus, your Lord and Savior.

**For a group Bible study:**

I'd like to separate into small groups of two or three people. Take a few moments to get each other's names and then have prayer together. Bear one another's' burdens. Praise the LORD for Who He is and what He has done for you. Ask God to help you forgive others who have caused you harm, and ask him also for the strength to ask forgiveness of those you have harmed and need to make restitution to.

**Addendum**

For those who would like a copy of this message or would like a copy of my message, “How to Truly Repent and Prepare for the Seal of God” go to my public FaceBook page: [BiblePlus.org](http://BiblePlus.org). You can also read some other articles there that may be helpful for you. LIKE the [BiblePlus](http://BiblePlus.org) page to be notified when other papers and sermons are posted.

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