

Forgiveness God's Way

God knows our penchant toward unforgiveness. But when we follow Jesus Christ, we must forgive, indeed we are commanded to forgive. We need to view forgiveness God's way, which is unlimited and (often) completely undeserved.

Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." Matt. 18: 21-22.

Why should we be so forgiving, especially when it is clear that another has done us wrong?

"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a certain king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. And when he had begun to settle them, there was brought to him one who owed ten thousand talents" Matt. 18: 23-24.

Ten thousand talents was (and is) a vast sum of money (~\$10,000,000 in silver), which likely could never be paid back.

"But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made" Matt. 18: 25.

The slave realizes his grave situation!

"The slave therefore falling down prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything.' And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt." Matt. 18: 26-27.

The lord realizes that the debt cannot be repaid, will never be repaid, but still forgives the slave. Our iniquities, our sins, can never be atoned for by anything that we do; we can never repay the Lord (*vide infra*, pp.5-6).

"But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.'" Matt. 18: 28.

100 denarii was about equivalent to 100 days wages and was a relatively small sum of money compared to ten thousand talents. This is the picture of our unforgiveness of others, and it is quite ugly.

"So his fellow slave fell down and began to entreat him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' He was unwilling however, but went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed." Matt 18: 29-30

Of course, being in prison, and not making any money, it would be impossible to pay back what was owed. The slave did not treat his fellow slave as his master had treated him. Furthermore, the amount owed to the slave was far less than what he owed the master.

“So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. Then summoning him, his lord said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?’” Matt. 18: 31-32.

The judgment: the incredible grace bestowed on the slave did not lead him to also bestow grace on his fellow slave. This behavior angers the Lord greatly:

“And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him” Matt. 18: 34.

Again, being in prison and tortured, it would be impossible to repay the master. This was a permanent situation, as is hell itself. The slave was now treated as he treated his fellow slave.

“So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart” Matt. 18: 35.

The servant forgot the merciful treatment his master gave him. He forgot the great sin he was forgiven of.

“For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins” 2 Peter 1: 9.

Forgiveness must be real and from the heart. Denial and “forgetting” won’t do it:

“The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.” 1 John 3: 9.

“But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court” Matt. 5: 22.

“For God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” 1 Sam 16: 7.

A perspective we should have: how does God forgive?

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him; And to our God, for He will

abundantly pardon. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55: 7-9.

“If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee.” Ps 130: 3-4.

The Lord wants us to forgive as He forgives.

The experience of the grace of God in our own lives, as sometimes incomprehensible as it is, should lead us to forgive and be merciful to others.

“And they refused to listen, and did not remember Thy wondrous deeds which Thou hadst performed among them; so they became stubborn and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But thou art a God of forgiveness, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness; and thou didst not forsake them.” Neh. 9: 17.

“In Him we have redemption through His Blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which He lavished upon us.” Eph. 1: 7.

God forgets nothing, but His way of forgiving is better than forgive and forget. When God forgives us, He sees us as though our sin never happened.

Can we forgive like that? Is impossible for us to forgive on our own?

“For which is easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’? But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins’-then He said to the paralytic- ‘Rise, take up your bed, and go home.’” Matt. 9: 5-7.

“And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, ‘Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone.’”

If we can truly forgive at all, it will be by God’s nature being imputed to us; the only way to truly forgive is to have His life in us. If we have embraced God's forgiveness and let that incredible gift penetrate our hearts, we can forgive others just as quickly, freely, and completely as Christ forgave us.

By Grace, we can do what God does.

“You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same.” Col. 3: 12-13.

“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” Eph. 4: 31-32.

“See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled.” Heb. 12: 15.

“To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the every purpose that you might inherit a blessing.” 1 Pet. 3:8-9.

“But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you... Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same... But love your enemies, do good... and your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful... Forgive, and you will be forgiven.” Luke 6:27-37.

We can't ignore an injury. When someone offends us or wrongs us, we quickly need to deal with it God's way. Time doesn't heal the pain. Harboring unforgiveness in our hearts hurts us, shatters our relationships, and hinders our walk with God.

Man's Total Depravity and his Need for the Forgiveness and Grace of God:

Genesis 6:5: "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

Genesis 8:21: "And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done."

Job 15:14: "What is man, that he can be pure? Or he who is born of a woman, that he can be righteous?"

Job 15:15: "Behold, God puts no trust in his holy ones, and the heavens are not pure in his sight; how much less one who is abominable and corrupt, a man who drinks injustice like water!"

Job 25:4-6: "How then can man be in the right before God? How can he who is born of woman be pure? Behold, even the moon is not bright, and the stars are not pure in his eyes; how much less man, who is a maggot, and the son of man, who is a worm!"

Psalms 51:5: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Psalms 58:3: "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies."

Ecclesiastes 7:20: "Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins."

Ecclesiastes 9:3: "This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead."

Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"

Jeremiah 13:23: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil."

Isaiah 64:6 "We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away"

Isaiah 64:7 "There is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you, for you have hidden your face from us and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities."

Isaiah 64:8 "But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand."

Mark 7:21-23: "For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

Matthew 7:11: "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him"

John 3:19: "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil."

John 6:44: "[Jesus said,] 'No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.'"

John 6:64-65: "[Jesus said,] 'But there are some of you who do not believe.' (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, 'This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.'"

John 8:34: "Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.'"

Romans 3:10-11: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God."

Romans 8:7-8: "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

1 Corinthians 2:14: "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."

Ephesians 2:1-3: "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience - among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."

Titus 3:3: "For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another."