

# Forgiveness, Human And Divine

**Introduction.** All men have sinned against the pure and righteous nature of God (Galatians 3:22). The only path back to God is through forgiveness. Forgiveness is a major Bible topic, being mentioned over 100 times in the two covenants. Forgiveness is a free dismissal or a full release. It is not probation or a "wait and see" testing of conduct or character.

## I. *The Forgiveness Of God*

- A. God is a God of forgiveness (Nehemiah 9:17; Daniel 9:9). Even the scribes and Pharisees knew God would forgive sins (Luke 5:21).
- B. When God pardons our sins, He is satisfied that nothing else is needed to remove them. Under the Old Law, continual sacrifices meant that sins were never really taken away (Jeremiah 31:34; cp. Hebrews 8:12; 10:17).
- C. God's promise of complete forgiveness was fulfilled in Jesus Christ though His shed blood on the cross (Acts 5:31; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:22).
- D. This promise is conditional.
  - 1. To the sinner who has become a believer the condition is to repent of their sins, confess Jesus as Christ, and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 8:35-38).
  - 2. To the sinful child of God the condition is to confess sins, repent, and pray for forgiveness (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9).

## II. *Our Forgiveness Of Each Other*

- A. God's ultimate forgiveness teaches us how to forgive others. Jesus taught forgiveness and He practiced it (Matthew 18:21-35; cp. Luke 23:34).
  - 1. Your happiness now and in the future depends greatly upon your willingness to forgive others.
  - 2. The future unity and happiness of this congregation does not depend on the fact that no mistakes will be made, but on our willingness to forgive.
- B. Do you remember how easy it was to forgive when you were a child? Why is it so hard to let being wronged go when we are adults and so easy when we were children?
  - 1. With some it is ego, pride, or just plain hate.
  - 2. With some it is a desire to "hold the hatchet" over others.
- C. No matter the psychological effects of forgiveness, it is this simple: if you will not give it, you cannot get it (Matthew 6:14-15)!

### III. ***Forgiveness Is Rare***

- A. You do not hear of many accounts of forgiveness today. Movies and television love to portray a lot of vengeance, but little forgiveness.
- B. Forgiveness is difficult because it calls us to dig deep for self-control.
  - 1. From time to time, all of us are hurt by others either physically or emotionally.
  - 2. Our first reaction when wronged is to hold a grudge or to retaliate.
    - a) Revenge is a form of hate (1 John 3:10, 14; 4:20).
    - b) Forgiveness comes from the heart, so unforgiveness is a heart problem.
  - 3. God gives us the solution to the problem (Romans 12:17-21).
    - a) If I cannot produce repentance in the one who has wronged me, God will take care of it! I can go on with my life and hopefully the rebellious one will repent.
    - b) Following the simple "Golden Rule" will help us to forgive (Matthew 7:12; Acts 7:60; 1 Corinthians 13:4).
  - 4. Jesus is our perfect example (1 Peter 2:22-23). My judgment may be flawed, but not His. He was able to forgive in the worst of circumstances.
- C. Forgiveness can sometimes be costly.
  - 1. If I break your priceless treasure, and you forgive me, you bear the loss and I go free.
  - 2. The forgiver continues to suffer the wrong.

### IV. ***Forgiving The Impenitent***

- A. Jesus issued a conditional statement upon which I am to forgive others in Luke 17:3-4. If someone does not repent, am I to forgive him?
  - 1. I am to forgive as God forgives (Ephesians 4:32). If there are conditions upon which God forgives me, there are conditions upon which I forgive others.
  - 2. Does God forgive those who do not seek forgiveness? Does He ask me to do more than what He does, demanding that I forgive men even when they do not ask me?
- B. Jesus prayed for the forgiveness of His crucifiers in Luke 23:34. Did some of those who took part in Jesus' crucifixion never seek forgiveness? Did God forgive them anyway? When were those forgiven who did take part in His crucifixion (cp. Acts 2:37)?
- C. Did God love us before He forgave us? Does He not treat each sinner with compassion and kindness before that sinner is forgiven? Can I not, therefore, love those who wrong me, showing compassion and kindness, yet not forgive them until they ask my forgiveness?

## V. ***Forgiving Ourselves***

- A. This is a serious problem with some Christians. What can we do about it?
  1. Trust in the all-sufficiency of God's forgiveness and comply with the laws of obtaining forgiveness. Then you must believe it is complete (1 John 1:9).
  2. God does not want you to carry the guilt of sin, especially in view of the fact that He gave His Son so sin could be forgiven. Your refusal to forgive yourself makes the sacrifice of Christ vain (cf. Hebrews 10:29).
- B. Paul had done so much against godliness and righteousness (Acts 26:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:13, 15), but his attitude was to "forget" and "press on" (Philippians 3:13-14).

**Conclusion.** Forgiveness is always beautiful. Write Ephesians 4:31-32 upon your heart. But remember that God has promised forgiveness to your repentance, but He has not promised tomorrow to your procrastination (2 Peter 3:9).