

Forgiven — If Forgiving



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Forgiveness is a lost art today as headlines proclaim the dominate attitudes of this age—resentment, anger, road rage, bitterness, hatred, spitefulness, hostility, vengeance, brutality, paybacks, and settling old scores. A willingness to forgive never enters the mind of the world, but it is the first thing on the list for the believer.

Every day begins with the prayer Luke 11:4 *“Forgive us our sins—just as we forgive those who have sinned against us.”* We ask God to forgive us, but that includes our forgiving others. We are *commanded* to forgive from the One who forgives us—and saves us from hell.

Forgiving those who offend us begins by recalling the suffering of Jesus, so He could forgive us. It is a decision to believe Him, and a choice to forgive them—no matter what happened or who did it. Being forgiven is possible only when we are willing to forgive. Mark 11:25 *“When you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too.”* Mark 11:26 *“But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”*

Being forgiven and forgiving others will be forever linked, because both involve trust on God and faith in Christ by the power of the Spirit. It is a decision on our part and inspired by divine love in our heart. 1 Peter 1:22 *“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the breth-*

ren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.”

Jesus taught through parables that refusing to forgive results in a horrible fate. He told about the unforgiving servant who had no pity on a fellow servant. Matthew 18:32-33 *“The king called in the man he had forgiven and said, ‘You evil [wicked] servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. Shouldn’t you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?’”* The man would have been speechless.

He could have been forgiven, if he was willing to forgive; but instead Matthew 18:34-35 *“his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”*

Satan is constantly tempting us to resent something, or someone, but the Blood of Christ has freed us from those wicked attitudes. Romans 8:12-13 *“You have no obligation whatsoever to do what your sinful nature urges you to do” [refuse to forgive]. For if you keep on following it, you will perish. But if through the power of the Holy Spirit you turn from it and its evil deeds, you will live.”* It is a choice to follow the Lord, or follow the world.

God is waiting 2 Peter 3:9 *“that all should come to repentance,”* and *no one* would perish, if they would be willing to repent of their sins, trust Him in faith, and forgive others from the heart. 1 John 1:9 *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* The choice to accept forgiveness includes our choice to forgive others.

Satan often suggests that we are *not* forgiven, because we deliberately rebelled, made too many mistakes, or sinned too seriously—but

none are valid, because God will forgive the moment we will repent. God told Moses Exodus 34:6-7 *“The LORD, the LORD [God], the compassionate [merciful] and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love [truth] and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.”*

Eternal souls are of eternal value so God has waited for centuries for us to turn back in faith, to love Him with all our heart, to trust Him for everything in life, and to follow His plan by faith by keeping His Word in our heart. Anyone could escape God’s wrath, but those who *do* will be those who repent, turn away from unbelief, and forsake their own sins.

God forgave repentant sinners all through the Bible. He told Moses to *“Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke”* Exodus 34:1. When we confess sins and forgive others, God promises to forgive our sins and forget our failures. Psalms 32:5 *“I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.”*

Religious leaders had mocked and threatened God’s Son with false allegations and lies. In their anger and wickedness, they finally murdered the Messiah. Such an outrageous crime would call for the most serious of punishments—with no mercy, leniency, or plea-bargain possible. It was premeditated murder that would call for the death penalty.

God just asks us to do for *others*, what He is always ready to do for *us*. After this brutal crime against His Son, forgiveness is offered. Acts 2:22-23 *“Men of Israel, listen to these words. Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you your-*

selves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross."

Jesus came to *save* sinners, but sinners *hated* Him. As guilty as they were of the worst crime possible, mercy is shown and forgiveness granted. The people asked what to do next, so the apostle said *Acts 2:38 "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."* The sentence for the worst crime in history is a gift of God's love.

He even extends mercy to their children, and to anyone else willing to repent; willing to forgive; and choosing to put their trust in His Son. *Acts 2:39 "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."*

God did His part, and now it is time to choose our fate—repent and forgive; or resent and stay bitter. An enormous price was paid to change our heart. Satan wants us to stay angry, annoyed, and resentful, but God wants us to forgive, forget, and be forgiven.

Satan's substitutes are limitless—financial plans, medical help, insurance coverage, safety devices, law suits, divorce, and so many others—the list is endless. Millions *say* they believe, but do not actively trust God in faith for anything—not for the avenging of wrongs, for healing of the body, for protection, for justice, or for anything else. *Matthew 15:8 "THIS IS A PEOPLE WHO HONOUR ME WITH THEIR LIPS, WHILE THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME."*

Saul was going to Damascus to prosecute Christians, but even guilty of that wicked attitude, God's mercy and grace is given. Jesus asks *Acts 9:4-5 "'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'" And he said, 'Who are You, Lord?'" Then the Lord said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are*

persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

God spared his life and Jesus saves his soul—if he will respond to the warning, make corrections in his attitude, accept the forgiveness offered, and extend the same to others. *Then* he would have a living hope of escaping the flames.

He openly admitted *1 Timothy 1:15-16 "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life."*

The seriousness of our sin does not cancel forgiveness, so the seriousness of an offense against us is no reason to withhold forgiveness. Jesus says *"Love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High"* *Luke 6:35.*

No matter how *serious*, how many *times*, or how *deliberately* we have sinned, God forgives the moment we repent. Jesus said *Matthew 12:31 "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men:"* and *32 "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven."* Satan suggests many discouraging things, but God forgives every repentant sinner.

The only escape out of this wicked world is through a believing faith in the Atonement sacrifice of Christ. Everyone will have to believe and put their trust on the blood of Jesus to be justified before God, or they will follow the world in unbelief and be judged guilty by the only One who could forgive them.

God wants *us* to believe, to forgive others, and to trust Him in faith for everything, but *that* is *our* decision. *Matthew 20:16 "Many are called, but few chosen"*—due to a serious lack of faith

in God. Jesus warned *Matthew 18:3 "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."*

The man who rejected scriptural advice on finances, was still loved by Jesus *Mark 10:21*, because God's love for us never changes—it is our love for *Him* that often changes. We have a *new* life that *wants* to forgive—but we can *still* be tempted to resent. The shed Blood of Christ brings a change in our heart; so *Romans 6:11 "reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord."* *Romans 8:12 "We have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature."*

The world resents anything, and everyone, for any reason, but we must be ready to forgive the moment we are insulted, because God does not allow us to hold any resentment toward anyone—we *must* forgive—because *He* does. We are to *Colossians 3:13 "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances [complaint; quarrel] you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you"* *Colossians 3:13.* That is all it takes—to be a true disciple of Christ.



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