



Truth For These Times



43. FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is one of the most wonderful doctrines of scripture, for without the forgiveness of our sins there would be no hope of eternal life for mankind. God, as our Creator, alone has the right to forgive, for all sin is an attack against Him. Sin is an act against His sovereignty, His holiness and His love. Sin involves our relationship to God; therefore God alone can forgive sin.

Isaiah 43:25 I, *EVEN I, AM HE WHO BLOTS OUT YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS*
for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.

Here we find a statement of truth, but more than this it is a wonderful promise. God promises not only to blot out our sins, but also to remember them no more. This is true forgiveness.

Psalms 51:4 *AGAINST YOU, YOU ONLY, HAVE I SINNED, and done this evil*
in Your sight—That You may be found just when You speak, *and*
blameless when You judge.

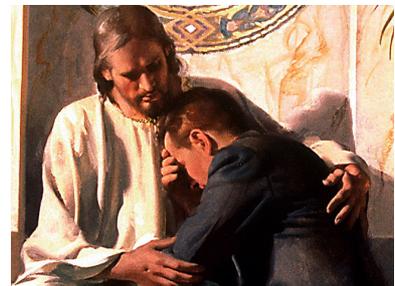
King David wrote psalm 51 after he had committed his dual sin of murder and adultery. He had wronged Uriah by arranging his murder. He had wronged Bathsheba by committing adultery with her. These were two most unacceptable sins in the eyes of man. He had wronged these two people, but he had sinned against God. The Lord forgave him his sin, but David suffered the natural outcome of his wrong deeds. God forgives sin, but it always leaves a scar.

James 5:16 *CONFESS YOUR TRESPASSES TO ONE ANOTHER, and pray for one*
another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous
man avails much.

The admonition of Scripture is to always make things right with your fellow man by confessing faults to one another. The proper Christian approach is to be willing to forgive, but only God can forgive sin, so His forgiveness must be sought also.

Psalms 130:7 O Israel, hope in the LORD; for *WITH*
THE LORD THERE IS MERCY, and with
Him *is* abundant redemption.

God delights in mercy and forgiveness to all who hope in the Lord. So many people have said; “My sin is too great – God won’t forgive me – He can’t.” My friend, if your sin is great, God’s forgiveness is greater. Jesus said that all manner of sin would be forgiven. That means any sin you would like to name, no matter how bad it may be. However, we only find forgiveness if we ask for it when we pray.



Obtaining forgiveness brings such wonderful peace.

THE FORGIVENESS OF MAN

Matthew 6:14,15 **FOR IF YOU FORGIVE MEN THEIR TRESPASSES, YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER WILL ALSO FORGIVE YOU. BUT IF YOU DO NOT FORGIVE MEN THEIR TRESPASSES, NEITHER WILL YOUR FATHER FORGIVE YOUR TRESPASSES.**

God is prepared to forgive completely, and He expects us to do the same. Here Jesus makes it very plain that if we are unforgiving toward our fellow man then God is unable to forgive us. The Rabbis in Christ's day limited forgiveness to 3 times. Peter thought he was being generous when he suggested to Christ that forgiveness to an erring brother be extended to 7 times, but Jesus replied, not 7 times, but 70 times 7. (Matthew 18:21,22). Jesus wasn't making 490 times the limit of forgiveness. He was showing Peter that as long as a brother repents we should be prepared to forgive. In other words we must cultivate a forgiving spirit.



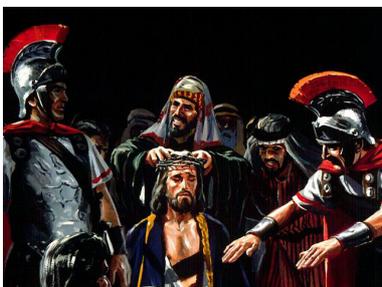
Jesus said to forgive 70 x 7, i.e. don't hold grudges or limit your forgiveness.

Read Matthew 18:23-35.

In this parable, the pardon granted by the king represents the divine forgiveness of sins. Christ is represented by the king and the two men are sinners, unable in their own strength to pay the debt of sin. The only way out of their problem was to be pardoned, The shed blood of Christ on the cross provides our pardon – if we accept it. In this parable, the man who was forgiven an enormous debt represents the Christian whose own sins are forgiven, but who will not forgive his fellow man. The final outcome of the parable shows that the unforgiving Christian will not find forgiveness either. Our sin toward God compared with the sin of our fellow man toward us can be compared at 1 million to 1 – How can we dare to be unforgiving?

Luke 17:3,4 **TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES. IF YOUR BROTHER SINS AGAINST YOU, REBUKE HIM; AND IF HE REPENTS, FORGIVE HIM.** And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him.

How often should we be prepared to forgive our fellow man? As often as God forgives us. We are not forgiven because we forgive, but as we forgive. The forgiveness is to be offered in the spirit of Christ.



Jesus is the ultimate example of forgiving his enemies.

CRITICISM – JEALOUSY – SELFISHNESS

An unforgiving way of life will lead to the development of a critical and exacting spirit. Jealousy and selfishness will become more manifest in the life and Christ likeness will diminish more and more while one maintains an attitude of unforgiveness.

Matthew 5:44 **But I say to you, LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,**

How difficult it is to love our enemies. Here Christ is speaking of love as a principle. We need not feel guilty if we do not have an emotional feeling toward our enemies; we simply treat them as friends. When this is done, quite often they do not remain enemies.

Here Jesus is telling us to even love the person who criticises us. If the criticism is valid then we should carefully consider it and profit by it. If it is delivered in malice we may be hurt by the injustice, but it is most unchristian (according to this verse) to retaliate, strike back or to seek vengeance. Jesus was criticised perhaps more than anybody else, yet He never spent time trying to get the record straight. He did not retaliate. He did not try to find out who was spreading false rumours about Him. He did not try to get even. He did not try to justify Himself. He accepted His lot graciously, and through love sought to win His enemies.

If we become critical in a destructive way we are aiding the enemy of God and man – the devil – for he is the “accuser of the brethren” Rev. 12:10. It is his work to criticise and tear down. If there is one thing that will eat away the soul and destroy our Christian experience, it is criticism.

GOD FORGIVES

Acts 13:38 Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that **THROUGH THIS MAN IS PREACHED TO YOU THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.**

It is through Jesus that we find forgiveness of sins. God’s forgiveness is based on mercy and justice. God is merciful in that He is prepared to forgive us our sins but justice was met when Christ paid the wages of sin by His death on the cross.

Ephesians 1:7 **IN HIM WE HAVE REDEMPTION** through His blood, **THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS**, according to the riches of His grace.



We should forgive for God has forgiven us by the cross.

When do we receive the forgiveness for our sins? It is not when we are good enough or when we are changed and receive eternal life – it is **NOW**.

1 John 1:7,9 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and **THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST HIS SON CLEANSSES US FROM ALL SIN. IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS** and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we confess our sins to God in prayer, the promise in these texts is that we will find forgiveness. How much of our sin is cleansed away? **ALL**. There are no exceptions, if you fulfill your part by confession – your sins are forgiven. God’s forgiveness is complete.

Luke 11:4 **AND FORGIVE US OUR SINS**, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Jesus wants us to pray for forgiveness. He wants us to be cleansed. He wants us in His eternal kingdom.

Micah 7:19 He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities.
YOU WILL CAST ALL OUR SINS INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE
SEA.

The sea is 11 kilometres deep in parts. God wants to remove our sins from us more than we realise. He has our interest at heart. He wants us to be saved.

Psalm 103:12 AS FAR AS THE EAST IS FROM THE
WEST, SO FAR HAS HE REMOVED
OUR TRANSGRESSIONS FROM US.



God totally removes our sins from us, as far as east from west, when we confess to Him.

North and South meet but East and West never do. That is how much God wants our sins removed from us.

Hebrews 8:12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their SINS AND
THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE.

When God forgives, He is prepared to forget. When our iniquities (lawless deeds) have been forgiven, God will not hold them against us. It is as if all our sins were written on a blackboard and God rubs them off. How God delights to forgive us our sins.

A word of caution: Forgiveness is not feeling. Feelings are unstable but God's promises are not. When we truly repent and confess our sins, God forgives us regardless of whether we feel they are forgiven or not. Martin Luther was once asked "Do you feel your sins are forgiven?" He replied "No. But I am as sure they are, as I am sure there is a God in heaven." We don't need feeling for assurance, we need faith.

When we have done our part we can arise from prayer confident that God has forgiven our sins, and confident that He will give us further victories. Don't be discouraged if you stumble, you may fall many times, but Jesus will lift you up and place you on the path again. Confession is not a convenience to the non-genuine Christian; it is a remedy for the one who falls into sin by weakness and not by design.



Martin Luther did not wait to feel forgiven; he believed it because the Bible said so.

The Bible teaching of forgiveness means that you can stand before God, sinless. Not because you are sinless but because your sins are forgiven. If your sins are forgiven when the Lord comes you will one day hear those wonderful words of Jesus "Come, blessed of my Father; inherit the kingdom." Have you confessed your sins to God? If you haven't – why not do it now?

Review Sheet – Forgiveness

ASSIGNMENT: Read the Bible study carefully before answering the following questions.

1. Who only can forgive our sins? Isaiah 43:25
I, _____.
2. Even though King David had committed murder and adultery, against whom had he really sinned? Explain. Psalm 51:4
Answer: _____
3. If we wrong our fellow man, what should we do? Explain. James 5:16
Answer: _____
4. Is God reticent about forgiving our sins? Psalms 130:7
With the LORD _____.
5. What is our outcome if we will not forgive our fellow man? Matthew 6:14, 15
Answer: _____
6. Explain the meaning of the parable in Matthew 18:23-35.
Answer: _____

7. What attitude did Jesus say we should have toward our enemies? Matthew 5:44. Explain this in a practical way.
Answer: _____
8. What is our part and what is God's promise regarding our sins? 1 John 1:7-9
Answer: _____
9. Through what act do we find forgiveness? Luke 11:4
Answer: _____
10. How does God illustrate the extent of His forgiveness? Micah 7:19
You will _____.
11. How does God further illustrate His willingness to forgive our sins? Psalms 103:12
As far as the _____,
_____.
12. Explain the relationship between forgiveness and the "feeling of forgiveness".
Answer: _____

Have you confessed your sins to God? YES _____ NO _____