

Forgiveness

We Must Forgive That God Will Forgive Us *A Study Outline*

I. Forgiveness is a most critical aspect of our day-to-day walk with God.

- A. Without forgiveness we cannot be made pure and free from sin.
- B. It forms the avenue by which our lives are saved from death: Jesus Christ paid the price for our sins by living a perfect, sinless life, and then being sacrificed and having His blood shed for each human being whom the Father calls (Hebrews 9:11-22). Without shed blood there is no *remission* of sin [**remission** (859) = **epheis** = freedom, pardon].
- C. Forgiveness is an essential part of the “model prayer” that Christ instructed us to pray “after this manner” (Matthew 6:9-12).
- D. The Old Testament sacrifices pictured the forgiveness of sins on a physical plane for a sinful, rebellious people (see the sin offerings of Leviticus 4 and elsewhere).
- E. Forgiveness is essential whenever sin is present; it can occur only when there is a perception of righteousness, of right and wrong, so cannot occur unless there is an acknowledgement of God’s laws, whether these laws are understood or not (I John 3:4).

II. What is forgiveness?

- A. Definitions (with *Strong’s Concordance* numbers):

Forgive

Old Testament (usually 5545): **calach**; “to forgive”.

New Testament (usually 863): **aphiem**; “to send forth [in freedom]”.

Forgiveness

Old Testament (5547): **celiychah**. From 5545; “pardon”.

New Testament (859): **aphesis**. From 863; “freedom, pardon”.

Forgiven

Old Testament (usually 5545): see *forgive*.

New Testament (usually 863): see *forgive*.

- B. The overall meaning is to remit sin or guilt, and to be pardoned from error.
- C. Its basis is an *act* that results from the underlying moral foundation of the spirit of God and its qualities: faith, hope, joy, peace, moderation, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and humility (Galatians 5:22-23 and elsewhere).
- D. Forgiveness is very close in definition — and cannot be separated from — other works of God’s people: compassion, love, mercy, judgement, kindness, and gentleness.

III. How does one forgive another person?

- A. It is imperative that you be **truly repentant** of your sins toward the other person in order that you be forgiven.
 - 1. As long as we repent we must be forgiven. Jesus told Peter to forgive his brother if his brother sinned against him: “I say not unto you, Until seven times, but, Until seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:21-22).
 - 2. Jesus Christ elaborated more thoroughly on this issue of forgiveness in Luke 17:3-4, when

he tied repentance to forgiveness: “Take heed to yourselves: If your brother trespass against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to you, saying, **I repent**, you shall forgive him.”

3. Thus, **repentance** of the offending party is a prerequisite to forgiveness, and there is no limit to the number of times we must forgive our brethren if they repent of offenses.

B. If others offend us but do not repent, we cannot ourselves forgive them, but can ask the Father to forgive them. He knows their heart (Hebrews 4:12) and can deal with them in His love and patience, while we do not possess such great insight into the other person’s character as He does.

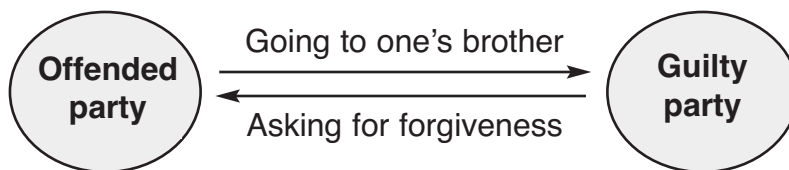
1. The example of Jesus Christ on the stake: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

2. The example of Stephen while being stoned: “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60).

3. The example of Jesus and the adulteress: The woman said that no one had accused her of her sin, and Jesus told her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more” (John 8:10-11). She was told to repent, but was not forgiven of her sin because she had not yet repented.

C. **You go to your brother that you have offended, and ask that you be forgiven** (Matthew 18:15) ... i.e., have your sins remitted. In a very real sense we do the same thing that Jesus Christ did when He allowed Himself to be sacrificed on the stake (John 10:15; 15:13). In Matthew 18:15, “... if he will hear you”... could as well say “... if he will ask your forgiveness ...”

D. However, unlike going to your brother concerning his offense (sin) to you, you go to your brother whom you have offended and ask that the sin be remitted (forgiven). See Luke 17:3.



E. Forgiveness is an *action* on your part that requires you to *identify* the sin that was committed, and then *confess* it, after which the other party *forgives* the infraction.

1. The infraction can be identified only when it is evaluated in the light of God’s laws (1 John 3:4; Romans 3:20; 7:7).

2. The forgiveness process:

Identify the error Confess your sin to your brother Be forgiven by your brother

F. This process is really a *servicing* cycle, the guilty party asking his brother to forgive while the offended party serves in return by forgiving.

G. Forgiveness becomes a **mutually accepted contract** between the parties that **wipes away the sin** that has been committed ... just as Christ wiped away our sins.

H. Forgiveness requires repentance, or changing, of the guilty party so he will no longer continue in the infraction.

1. Matthew 18:21-35, Luke 17:3-4. **Repent** in Luke 17:3 is **metanoeo** (3340), or “think differently, afterward, or reconsider”.

2. Repentance knows no limits as long as it is genuine.

I. Forgiveness is especially potent in dealing with “enemies” — those who are attempting to hurt or trouble us. Do good to them, and thus “heap coals of fire upon their heads” (Proverbs 25:21-22; Romans 12:20).

1. Benefiting your enemy’s possessions is a form of forgiveness (Exodus 23:4-5).

2. Be merciful to those who mistreat you (Matthew 5:7, 39-48; also in Luke 6:27-34).

3. Love your enemies (Luke 6:35-37).

4. Bless those who persecute you (Romans 12:14-21; I Corinthians 4:12-13).

J. Especially forgive the brethren, for they do not ever intend to harm you but are your partners in suffering (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13).

IV. Who should forgive?

A. All of God's people **must** forgive!

1. Matthew 18:35: We must all forgive our brother his sin against us, from the heart. In the preceding parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:23-34), the servant failed to forgive a debt from a fellow servant who came to him with a repentant attitude; the unforgiving servant then had to pay the debt his Father had forgiven him, and was tossed to the "tormenters" until the debt would be paid. We can forgive others whom we have something against as we pray, asking the Father to forgive them (Mark 11:25).

2. Matthew 6:12-15: If we do not forgive others of their sins against us, our heavenly Father will not forgive us of our sins. See also Mark 11:25-26.

B. We stand naked and accused of our sins if we do not forgive others of their sins against us, for we have failed to do as Christ showed us — through his own actions of being crucified for our sins — to be a living sacrifice for others in the world (Romans 12:1; Galatians 2:20).

V. Should we forgive the wicked?

A. No. Those who are truly **wicked** (Strong 7451 = *ra'*, "bad" or "evil") do evil on a habitual basis, and do not even desire to know of God and His ways.

1. Job 21:1-34. The wicked tell God to leave them alone, and do not want to acknowledge His ways and obey Him; prayer in their minds is futile (verses 14 and 15).

Verse 16. **Wicked** (Strong 7563) = *rasha*, "morally wrong, and actively bad person".

2. Job 18:21. The wicked do not know God.

3. Psalm 73:8-9. The wicked speak wickedly against God.

B. The wicked are sometimes born that way, and there is no way they can be turned to do good.

1. Matthew 13:36-43. There are tares, sons of the Devil, who will be gathered up and burned at the end of the age.

2. Revelation 13:8. Those on the earth whose names are not written in the Book of Life will worship the Beast. These by definition will be destroyed in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15), and there will be quite a number of them.

C. Just as each person seems right in his own eyes (Proverbs 16:2), and as Satan, the father of the wicked, feels justified in his evil deeds, so the wicked perceive themselves as right and good, and even believe that God is wicked like they are (Psalm 50:20-21).

D. The wicked will not learn righteousness (Isaiah 26:10).

E. We are instructed to pray for the demise of the wicked.

1. Psalm 139:21. "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate You?"

2. Psalm 79. See verse 6. "Pour out your wrath upon the heathen that have not known you, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon your name".

3. Psalm 69:27-28. David prayed that God's enemies, rather than be converted to His way, will *not* be converted.

4. Galatians 1:6-9. Paul prayed for the damnation of those who were preaching a false gospel to the Galation church.

5. The imprecatory Psalms (7, 35, 55, 58, 59, 69, 79, 109, 137, and 139) ask for God's children to pray for God's wrath on the heathen.

VI. Why must we forgive others?

- A. We remove conflict, hatred, and animosity from our lives and enable ourselves to live fully in the light of God's spiritual fruits (Galatians 5:22-23; the fruits of the Spirit).
- B. By forgiving we achieve true peace of mind and bring health to our total being, for showing fear of God by forgiving is "... health [medicine] to your navel and marrow [watering or moistening] to your bones" (Proverbs 3:8). By forgiving others you clear your mind of guilt so you can pray more effectively (Mark 11:25).
- C. Forgiving others is so critical that, unless we forgive others of their sins against us, our Father will refuse to forgive us (Matthew 6:14-15; 18:34-35; James 2:13). We are in a very real sense doing to others what our Father is doing with us ... which is the meaning of the law and the prophets (Matthew 7:12). We are in nearly every way following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ (I John 2:26).

VII. Some examples of forgiveness in Scripture:

- A. Joseph forgave his brothers (Genesis 45:5-15; 50:19-21).
- B. David forgave Saul (I Samuel 24:10-12; 26:9, 22-25).
- C. David forgave Shimei (II Samuel 16:5-13).
- D. Jesus asked the Father to forgive His enemies (Luke 23:34).

VIII. Think of those whom we may forgive, who have done evil to us and for whom we may still have some animosity lurking in our hearts. Forgiveness will open the pathway to healing.