

# Forgiving Others

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## Introduction

We do not have to live very long on this planet before we discover two very sure things.

- Other people are going to offend us, and
- We will inevitably offend others.

The reason why offenses are inevitable is that no one in the Body of Christ is perfect. We are all in a process. There is no such thing as a perfect saint, pastor or church.

We all could wear the badge: **PBPGINFWMY**

### **Please Be Patient, God Is Not Finished With Me Yet!**

Jesus anticipated this when He spoke of the local church in Matthew 18. In the previous chapters He had referred to the universal church and described the overcoming and conquering nature of it (Mt. 16:18b-19).



**PBPGINFWMY**

*... I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*

But this Church described by Jesus is not where we live on a daily basis. We live in the local church that Jesus described in Matthew 18.

Matthew 18:15-22 – This is the only time that Jesus directly spoke of the local church and He did so in regard to the area of offense.

*“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ 17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. 18 Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.*

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

**Now this is the church that I live in.**

**In this passage Jesus stressed the importance of our forgiving others.**

Actually His eternal purpose depends upon it.

**From Jesus' words we learn six things about forgiving others.**

**Forgiving others is...**

### **1. Not a matter of choice.**

Jesus indicated that we do not have a choice in the matter of forgiving others. It is our Christian duty to forgive (Mark 11:25). It is a command of Jesus.

*And whenever you stand praying, if you have **anything against anyone**, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.*

When Jesus says that we are to forgive, "Anything against anyone," that is pretty inclusive.

### **2. A condition for receiving forgiveness.**

Jesus taught us that our forgiveness of others is a condition for our receiving God's forgiveness.

- a. He included this teaching in the Lord's Prayer (Mt. 6:12; Luke 11:4).

*And forgive us our debts, **as we forgive our debtors.** Matthew 6:12*

"This is the invariable rule by which God dispenses pardon. He that comes before him unwilling to forgive, harboring dark and revengeful thoughts, how can he expect that God will show him that mercy which he is unwilling to show to others?" *Barnes' Notes*

- b. He emphasized it again on a number of occasions (Mt. 6:14-15; Mark 11:26; Luke 6:37).

*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. Matthew 6:14-15*

*But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Luke 6:35-37*

### **3. Is to be done quickly.**

Jesus taught that we are to quickly forgive when those who have offended us repent (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.*

This admonition of the Lord seems too easy, too quick. Surely we need to make people suffer a little more for what they have done. Surely we must make them wait for our judgment or our forgiveness. After all...

Wait! Is that how you want God to forgive you?

#### **4. Is to be done completely.**

Jesus taught that we are to forgive without keeping accounts (Mt. 18:21-22; Luke 17:4).

Jesus had just finished talking about offenses in the local church and how to resolve them.

*Then Peter came to Him and said, "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." Matthew 18:21-22*

In this context that disciples said, "Lord, increase our faith!" (Luke 17:5).

*"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." 5 And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith."*

Actually if we are forgiving the way Jesus suggested that we forgive, we cannot keep track of the number of times the offense has happened. Once we forgive someone the list is cleared and we go back to number one.

When we forgive, we are not to file the offense away in a safe place to be brought out again if needed. We are to burn the file.

#### **5. Is to be done unconditionally.**

Jesus taught that forgiving others was not dependent upon their asking for our forgiveness (Mark 11:25).

*And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.*

a. Jesus demonstrated this on the cross (Luke 23:34).

*Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."*

- b. Stephen demonstrated this at his stoning (Acts 7:60).

*Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

We do not have to wait until we "feel like it" to forgive. This is a command of God and not subject to our feelings. I am sure that neither Jesus nor Stephen felt like forgiving at the time that they extended it. It is not hypocrisy to forgive when you don't feel like it. It is obedience and it is the smart thing to do. We do not forgive because we feel like it; we forgive as an offering to Christ based on our love for Him. We forgive because we are those who walk in the constant awareness that we are an object of totally undeserved forgiveness. We also forgive because when we do not forgive we live in torment.

We cannot wait until people do the right thing or say the right thing by coming to us and asking for forgiveness. If we wait for this it may never come. The offending party may not even be aware that they offended us. Regardless of what the situation may be, we need to be free. We do not need to live one more day in a prison house.

## **6. Is a healthy way to live.**

Jesus taught that if we do not forgive we will experience negative fruit.

### **When we do not forgive...**

#### **1. Our prayers will be hindered (Mark 11:25, See also I Pet. 3:7).**

*And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.*

#### **2. Our gifts and ministries will be rendered ineffective (Mt. 5:23-24).**

*Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

God does not receive our gifts unless we are at peace with one another.

#### **3. God may withdraw His forgiveness of us (Mt. 18:35).**

*So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.*

#### **4. We will personally suffer and dwell in a prison house of our own making (Mt. 18:23-35).**

*Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be*

*sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. 26 The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, "Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all." 27 Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. 28 But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, "Pay me what you owe!" 29 So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you all." 30 And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. 31 So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. 32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. 33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" 34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. 35 So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.*

Jesus told the parable of the unforgiving servant. From this parable we learn many things:

- a. There is no possible way that we could ever repay God the debt that we owe to him.
- b. The forgiveness that we have received from God is totally undeserved because our debt was real.
- c. What others owe to us is totally insignificant when compared to the debt that we owed to God.
  - a. By not extending forgiveness to others we demonstrate a lack of true appreciation for and gratitude concerning God's unspeakable gift to us.
  - b. God is further offended when we do not reciprocate His generosity. We are viewed as a "wicked" servant.
  - c. When we refuse to forgive, this passage implies that God will withdraw His forgiveness from us.

## **6. We will experience the fruit of bitterness (Heb. 12:14-15).**

*Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled...*

*Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that **no one misses the grace of God** and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. –NIV*

God wants to give us His grace to do the right thing. We do not want to miss our opportunity to experience this grace.

Bitterness will taint everything that we do (Jam. 3:11).

*Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?*

When we do not forgive others we experience some negative reactions both physiologically and psychologically. This has been demonstrated from a medical point of view.

- High blood pressure
- Increased levels of stress
- Hostility in relationships
- Anger and intolerance
- Increased heart rate
- Higher instance of substance abuse
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Difficulty in developing wholesome friendships
- Headaches and chronic pain
- Inability to commit to others

### **Is this where you want to live?**

### **What does it mean to extend forgiveness to others?**

**Extending God's forgiveness means several things:**

**1. It means that we express our forgiveness to them in words.**

It is not a matter of just being nice to them or buying them a sweet gift. The words must be said to bring a completion and finality to the act of forgiveness.

**2. It means that we refuse to bring the matter up to the offending party again.**

This means no overt comments or subtle reminders especially when they fail you again. No statements like, "There you go again..."

**3. It means that we treat the offending party as if it had never happened.**

**4. It means that we refuse to talk to others about it anymore.**

We shouldn't have been talking to others about it in the first place unless the talk was moving toward an honest solution. But the offense should never come up in our conversation again. If others bring it up we should make sure that we let them know that all is well and proceed to shut the conversation down.

**5. It means that we refuse to dwell on the offense in our minds.**

**Closing Verse: Ephesians 4:29-32**

*Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*

We are to forgive even as God in Christ has forgiven us. When He forgives our sins, He—

1. Remembers our sins no more (Jer. 31:34).
2. Removes our sins as far from Him as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12).
3. Casts our sins into the depths of the sea, never to be retrieved again (Mic. 7:18-20).

Even in our world when you want to dispose of something so that it can never be retrieved, you go to the deepest part of the ocean where no man can survive and drop it there.

**God's forgiveness is complete and it is eternal!**