

# Forgiveness

God, Others, Ourselves

- Understanding forgiveness is essential to the Christian faith.
- Forgive: MW 11<sup>th</sup> Edition definition
  - To give up claim to requital for (forgive an insult).
  - To grant relief from payment of (forgive a debt).
  - To pardon (forgive one's enemies).
- Forgive: Hebrew vocabulary
  - סָלַח (saw-lakh) = pardon [Num 14:19-20].
  - סְלִיחָה (səl-ee-khaw) = forgiveness [Ps 130:4].
  - נָשָׂא (naw-saw) = lift up, forgive [Gen 50:17].
  - כָּפַר (kaw-far) = cover over [Ps 78:38; 79:9].
  - כָּסָה (kaw-saw) = cover, conceal [Neh 4:5].
- Forgive: Greek vocabulary
  - ἀφίημι (af-ee-ay-mee) = release from obligation, forgive [Luke 5:20-24; 23:34].
  - ἄφεσις (af-es-is) = remission of penalty, forgiveness [Eph 1:7; Heb 9:22; 10:18].
  - ἀπολύω (ap-ol-oo-oh) = grant acquittal, pardon [Luke 6:37].
  - χαρίζομαι (kar-id-zom-ai) = show grace to, forgive [Luke 7:42-43; 2 Cor 12:13].
- There are three main areas of forgiveness that we must come to understand.
  - God's forgiveness of men.
  - Forgiveness between men.
  - Forgiving ourselves.
- God's forgiveness of men...
  - God's forgiveness of men is always done in accordance with His perfect essence [Ex 34:6-7; Neh 9:17; Ps 99:1-9; 103:1-13; Dan 9:9-19].
  - We are all sinners in need of God's forgiveness [Rom 3:23-24].
  - We cannot be forgiven apart from salvation through faith in Jesus Christ [Col 1:13-14].
  - Forgiveness before the Cross
    - ✦ Innocent animals were sacrificed on behalf of sinful men [Gen 3:21; Lev 5:5-19].
    - ✦ These animal sacrifices were purely symbolic and could not take away sins [Heb 10:4].
    - ✦ Sins were "passed over" by God [Rom 3:25].
    - ✦ Such forgiveness was possible because these sins would eventually be brought to judgment as they were imputed to Christ on the Cross.
    - ✦ Ritual purification was not the same as forgiveness of sins [2 Chr 30:18-20].

- Forgiveness after the Cross
  - ✦ Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, has once and for all taken sin away [Heb 10:12 cf. Jn 1:29].
  - ✦ Animal sacrifice is no longer necessary.
  - ✦ Forgiveness of sins comes when one places his faith in Christ [Acts 10:43].
  - ✦ Forgiveness of sins is only one of many grace blessings God bestows on us at the moment of our salvation.
    - Forgiveness of sins is, in a sense, subtraction.
    - Salvation includes many glorious additions.
- Experiential Forgiveness
  - ✦ Our personal sins grieve [Eph 4:30] and quench [1 Thess 5:19] the Holy Spirit.
  - ✦ When we confess our sins God cleanses all our unrighteousness and restores us to fellowship with Him as well as our brothers and sisters in Christ [1 Jn 1:3-9].
  - ✦ We should confess our sins as soon as we realize we are out of fellowship.
  - ✦ Old Testament examples of confession of sin [Ps 32:1-5; 51:1-5].
  - ✦ Confession is associated with turning away from (forsaking) sins [Pr 28:13; Isa 55:7].
  - ✦ As long as we continue in our rebellion and transgressions, we will not receive forgiveness [Lam 3:42].
  - ✦ Forgiveness of sins does not preclude the possibility of discipline [2 Sam 12:13-14].
- Forgiveness between men...
  - Forgiveness of others comes from seeing things from God's viewpoint [Gen 45:1-8; 50:17-21].
  - When we see things from God's viewpoint, we are motivated to seek forgiveness on behalf of others as well [1 Sam 25:23-28].
  - All sin is against God [Ps 51:4] so we should seek God's forgiveness before the forgiveness of men, but King Saul did not do that [1 Sam 15:9-35].
  - Restoration to fellowship with God does not preclude the need for restoration to fellowship with men [Matt 5:23-24].
  - The Lord desires for us to be at peace with one another [Rom 12:18; Heb 12:14].
  - When our brother in Christ responds to discipline or a rebuke and repents of his sin, we are to forgive him [2 Cor 2:6-11] as often as it happens [Luke 17:3-4].
  - We should (in love) forgive as we have been forgiven [Eph 4:30-32; Col 3:12-17].
  - Refusal to forgive keeps us out of fellowship with God [Matt 6:9-15; Mk 11:25-26] and results in discipline [Matt 18:21-35].
  - Prayer can bring about the restoration of sinful believers, leading to repentance and forgiveness of sin [Jas 5:14-16].
  - When you forgive you do not need to forget, but once fellowship has been restored with a brother, do not use the offense as a stumbling block.

- Forgiving ourselves...
  - There are no passages in the Bible that speak of forgiving ourselves.
  - Forgiving ourselves does nothing unless we have first received the forgiveness of God.
  - If we know that God has forgiven our sins and our orientation is toward pleasing God, forgiving ourselves follows naturally.
  - If we are unable to forgive ourselves, it is due to...
    - ✦ a refusal to accept the complete forgiveness we receive from God in His matchless grace.
    - ✦ a guilt complex that insists that we must somehow pay for what we have done.
    - ✦ a self-centered viewpoint that seeks our own approval instead of God's approval.
- Conclusions
  - Forgiveness of sin by God is available only to those who are born-again to eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.
  - Confession of sin is required for temporal forgiveness of sin and restoration to fellowship with God.
  - If we do not forgive others (and ourselves) as we have been forgiven by God, we will harbor malice and will find ourselves continually wallowing in a whole host of mental attitude sins (anger, bitterness, envy, etc.).
  - When we live from the perspective of unselfish, sacrificial, integrity love (ἀγάπη), we will release our claims on others (and ourselves) and receive the inner peace that can only come from God Himself [1 Cor 13:5; 2 Tim 2:24].