

Forgiveness

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses,
your heavenly Father will also forgive you”

(Matthew 6:14)

A subject of forgiveness had been covered deeply by the Word of God beginning at the Old Testament. In the New Testament the Lord Jesus spoke much about forgiveness. The apostles of Jesus during the early church age taught and practiced forgiveness.

Jesus not only spoke about forgiveness but also was an example of it. While hanging on the cross in pain and agony after being crucified by his own people He was able to say: **“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”**

That is why David in Psalms 86:5 said:

5 For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

While teaching His disciples how to pray Jesus mentioned that a needed part of our approach to God should be asking for forgiveness for our faults, trespasses and our sins while we are responsible to forgive others:

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” (Matthew 6:12)

And He also added:

14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matthew 6:14-15)

We are in great need of forgiveness from God. Apostle John in I John chapter 1 said:

1 John 1:8-9

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

God is faithful to forgive our sins if we confess them (unburden our conscience). But we have to learn how to forgive first before we can ask forgiveness from God.

“... forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:” (Luke 6:37)

“And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.” (Mark 11:25)

What is forgiveness?

To *forgive* means to *send forth*, in various applications: - cry, forgive, forsake, lay aside, leave, let (alone, be, go, have), omit, put (send) away, remit, suffer, yield up.

(Strong's Hebrew's and Greek dictionaries)

forgive – to excuse for a fault or offense; to pardon. (American Heritage Dictionary)

To forgive means to lay aside, to let go of the error / wrongs that others had done to us. Forgiveness brings great relief to the soul. It unburdens the heart.

There was a time when Peter asked Jesus:

Matthew 18:21-22

21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

22 Jesus saith unto him, **I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.**

We have to recognize that we are all humans and we all have a struggle. We cannot count how many times this person or that trespassed against us. We should ask God to help us to humble ourselves and forgive those that wrong us or ought against us.

Luke 17:3-4

3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.

4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

Jesus taught us the importance of forgiveness in the following verses:

Matthew 18:23-35

23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

29 And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

- 30** And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.
- 31** So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.
- 32** Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:
- 33** Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?
- 34** And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.
- 35** So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Jesus also said:

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” (Matthew 5:23-24)

Forgiveness brings cleansing to the mind and to the heart.

There were so many great men who went before us. Many of them were faced with wrongs that were done to them. But they were able to forgive and go on with a clear conscience.

* Joseph, who was bound by his own brothers and sold out to Egypt, forgave his brothers their wrong against him. Joseph suffered much during his time in bondage and later even went through a prison experience. He could get bitter against his brethren but his heart forgave and let go of the wrong. More than anything he preserved love for his brethren. When his brethren finally were forced to come to Egypt due to the famine that was in the land Joseph revealed himself to them (he was already in great authority with the Pharaoh of Egypt) and he let them dwell safely in the land of Egypt:

Genesis 45:1-5

- 1** Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.
- 2** And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.
- 3** And Joseph said unto his brethren, I *am* Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.
- 4** And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I *am* Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.
- 5** Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

A forgiving heart will even try to help in time of need even to the people that had done wrong to him.

* David had suffered much from the trespasses that were done to him. His own son Absalom stole the heart of the people while David was still a king. David had to flee for his life. Later when David found out that Absalom had been killed by one of his servants he was grieved deeply and cried:

2 Samuel 18:33

33 And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!

A person with a heart full of forgiveness will pray and cry for those that trespass against him:

“Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.” (Luke 6:28)

* Jesus forgave Peter for betraying Him three times right after Jesus was taken by the soldiers for judgment:

Luke 22:54-62

54 Then took they him, and led *him*, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.

55 And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.

56 But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him.

57 And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

58 And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.

59 And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this *fellow* also was with him: for he is a Galilaean.

60 And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

61 And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, **Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice.**

62 And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

What was that look of Jesus? Was it a look of love? Was it a look of forgiveness and compassion? Because we read right after the resurrection of Jesus how He spoke to Peter:

“So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?* He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, **Feed my lambs.” (John 21:15)**

May the Lord Jesus give us a forgiving heart and help us to be more like Him who is **“...ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy” (Psalms 86:5).**