

Forgiven and Forgiving

1 John 4:16 [NIV] *“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.”*

God is love; this makes Him the God of forgiveness.

How can I say this?

The Greek word translated “love” when referring to God, Christ or Holy Spirit is always “*agapé*”.

This word is used to describe a love that *“is spontaneous love, irrespective of the rights or response of the recipient.”*

Such a nature will always forgive any sin.

Therefore where we find forgiveness we find God’s Love and where there is no forgiveness God’s Love is not present.

1 John 4:19-21 [NIV] *“We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.”*

We could read this passage of scripture *“anyone who does not forgive his brother does not have the love of God in him.”*

Love and forgiveness are one and the same thing.

If we believe in the forgiveness of sins we must believe it is everyone’s sins.

John 3:16 [NIV] *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

Christ’s sacrifice covers the sins of all people, so His Love and forgiveness extends to all people.

1 John 3:4 [NIV] *“Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.”*

In this world’s society when we break the law [sin] we have to pay for that law breaking.

If that breach of the law is serious the “*pay back*” could be death.

If this approach to breaking the law and our having to pay the penalty creeps into a religion it is not Christianity.

True Christianity is not judgemental in its approach to life.

John 3:17 [NIV] *“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”*

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came first of all **not** to judge the world but to save it by confirming the forgiveness of sins, because God is Love.

This forgiveness of sins was foreshadowed in the Old Covenant through the animal sacrifices and the temporary forgiveness of each sin committed.

There is no half measures with forgiveness, either all debts are cancelled or all debts are to be collected.

Matthew 18:21-27 [NIV] *“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. ‘Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. ‘The servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master took pity on him, cancelled the debt and let him go.’”*

This debt was vast, in today’s currency we are talking about millions of pounds.

This is the debt we owe God, it is beyond our calculation.

Our lives, our world, our friends and relatives, our food and our forgiveness of each and every rebellious sin.

Romans 3:23 [NIV] *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”*

All of us because we have sinned prevent God from giving us a glorified body and eternal life.

Romans 6:23 [NIV] *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

All we do in good actions or deeds in the end will only earn us death.

We fail to pay off this great debt to God.

First of all we have to accept the forgiveness of God, which is part of the love that is His nature.

We do this by accepting the death of Jesus Christ instead of our own deserved death.

How do we know we have sinned?

Romans 7:7 [NIV] *“What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed **I would not have known what sin was except through the law.** For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, ‘Do not covet.’”*

The law found in God’s Word, the Christian Bible, shows us what sin is.

Romans 13:9-10 [NIV] *“**The commandments**, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not covet,’ and whatever other commandment there may be, **are summed up in this one rule: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.**’ Love does no harm to its neighbour. **Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.**”*

Love [forgiveness] can fulfil the whole law as expressed in the Old Covenant.

The love that Jesus Christ showed for us in sacrificing His own life, the life of the Son of God, the One through Whom all things were created, fulfils the whole law of God on our behalf.

This we have to humbly accept without cost.

We are then invited by God to become like His Son.

Philippians 2:5-8 [NIV] *“**Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself***

nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross!”

We become like Jesus Christ if we also pay the cost of forgiving others who sin against us, that is those who lack any Godly love towards us.

Philippians 2:2-4 [NIV] *“then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”*

This forgiving others can be costly physically and mentally.

It involves giving up pride and selfish passion by expressing humility.

Matthew 6:14-15 [NIV] *“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”*

This does **not** mean that we earn forgiveness by forgiving others.

Matthew 7:1-5 [NIV] *“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way as you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”*

Having a non-judgemental attitude, forgiving attitude toward others means we take the log out of our eye and are able to see then the log size sins we have compared with the speck like sins we see in others.

Such an attitude aids us to become as loving and forgiving as our Creator God.

To any unforgiving person who has no intention of ever forgiving, Jesus spells out the danger, that such a person might never see forgiveness.

Matthew 12:31-32 [NIV] *“And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”*

Why does this blasphemy against Holy Spirit bring us to possibly committing unforgivable sin?

Galatians 5:22 [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,”*

The resulting fruit of an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit is love, a forgiving attitude.

If we resist the work of the Holy Spirit in us we will **not** have this loving, forgiving nature.

How do we resist the work of Holy Spirit in us?

1 Thessalonians 5:19 [NIV] *“Do not put out the Spirit’s fire;”*

Putting out the zeal in us for God’s way of life.

Revelation 3:15-17 [NIV] *“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I am about to spit you*

out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked."

If we are like **these people** described in this passage who **did not see the need for forgiveness from God**, we are beyond His forgiveness.

Ephesians 4:30-31 [NIV] *"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice."*

Bitterness which is an unforgiving attitude of mind can block out the Holy Spirit from our lives and prevent the fruit of love developing in our nature.

Taking up such a challenge will be costly but brings with it a great reward in the future.