

# The Problem Of Forgiveness

**Forgiveness is more than merely an ideal Christian virtue, it penetrates to the very heart of life.**

**Jesus Christ in His ministry brought up the subject of forgiveness repeatedly and with great urgency.**

**Matthew 5:21-26** [New King James] *“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire. 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. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.”*

**The reconciliation will include forgiveness by both people.**

**Matthew 6:14-15** [New King James] *“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.”*

**Directly after the example of what order and contents our prayers should take, Jesus Christ gives us a powerful prod to forgive those who hurt us.**

It becomes clear as we read through the New Testament that when we forgive each other’s trespasses, we reflect and participate in the divine character of the Triune God.

**Matthew 18:21-35** [New King James] *“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. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 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. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. 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!’ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. 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. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, **from his heart**, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”*

**Do not overlook the statement in verse 35, “from his heart,” we must really be beyond just words.**

**Ephesians 4:32** [New King James] *“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”*

Note this was in the context of our grieving the Holy Spirit, the key Person in our receiving eternal life, [verse 30].

Judging from the gospel's message of forgiveness and reconciliation, relationship with God and fellow human beings is central.

**1 Peter 1:13-20** [New King James] *“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’ And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you”*

**It means that even before the creation of the first human beings and their becoming alienated from God because of sin, God had in His love launched His plan to reconcile humans to Himself and to each other.**

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross vividly teaches that forgiveness lies at the heart of reconciliation.

**From human logic we may ask, “Doesn’t forgiving this person in this way mean I am justifying what they did?”**

*“Isn’t forgiving them, in essence, letting them get away with it?”*

**A good question, but the answer from God’s Word, the Christian Bible, is “No.” For our forgiveness has nothing to do with the natural consequences of sin taking their course.**

**Psalms 51:4** [New King James] *“Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight, that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.”*

**All sin is ultimately against the Creator God and it is His responsibility to deal with the sins of others, not ours.**

**Our act of forgiveness is an act of humility, our realisation that we also need God’s mercy, and an act of love extending to others what God has already extended to us.**

**It is also an act of faith, turning the whole situation over to God believing that God will deal with it in His own way and His own time, for only He is aware of all thoughts and motivations of all concerned, [Psalms 139:1-16].**

**Psalms 9:1-4** [New King James] *“I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvellous works. I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High. When my enemies turn back, they shall fall and perish at Your presence. For You have maintained my right and my cause; You sat on the throne judging in righteousness.”*

**David, who was “a man after God’s own heart,” [Acts 13:22] knew and trusted God’s judgement, this will not allow any thought of revenge to take root in our hearts.**

God has made the promise that He will right all wrongs.

When we read the last chapter of Revelation in God’s Word, the Christian Bible, we find ourselves in the midst of a vision where God brings about a very different world for all humanity.

**Revelation 21:2-6** [New King James] *“Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’ Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ And He said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful.’ And He said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.’”*

**Our forgiving all who harm us is part of our personal preparing to be a part of this soon-coming new world, [Revelation 22:20-21].**