

Forgiveness Is For Giving!

How do you react to other people's sins?

Unless you and I are close to God and aware of our shortcomings we react according to emotions and human reasoning.

For example –

When someone sins against us we can judge them and **not** forgive them.

Or we can ignore the sin as we don't want to cause upsets, making a mental note of the sin and link it with them forever.

We may think we have forgiven them but we have **not** forgotten the sin.

Since people will offend us, we need to learn how to handle offences God's way –

God will never compromise His laws, but God does forgive sins.

God can do this because of Jesus Christ's sacrifice.

Once we recognise our error, repent and resolve not to repeat the sin, God forgives us.

The event is forgotten, except for the lesson learnt, [Isaiah 43:25; Psalms 103:12].

Psalms 86:5 [New King James] *“For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.”*

God is always ready to forgive, this is the attitude we also should have towards other human beings.

Psalms 51:4 [New King James] *“And my sin is always before me. 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 against the Creator God for it is the breaking of the laws that He has given to human beings to live the lives that will bring them joy and fulfilment.

When we hold a sin against another human being we are usurping God's authority.

We set ourselves up in place of God's perfect judgement and mercy.

How often have we felt that a wrong was too great to be forgiven?

This is human quality “forgiveness” faltering in the presence of our human pride.

We say we will eventually forgive, but first the offender needs to be taught a lesson.

Or we may have felt too hurt to consider forgiveness.

Even this hurt feeling, although natural to any human being, is the result of our pride if it keeps us from forgiving the offender.

Jesus Christ suffered far more injustice than we ever will, yet He did **not** consider His own feelings.

Jesus Christ was deeply hurt by His enemies and His friends alike, but He **never** let any pride affect Him, He did **not** feel self-pity.

Matthew 12:31-32 [New King James] *“Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.”*

Jesus Christ even said that blasphemy against His name could be forgiven.

Luke 23:33-34 [New King James] *“And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’”*

Jesus Christ did **not** even judge those who were murdering Him, but asked the Father to forgive them in their ignorance.

We should enjoy forgiving people who offend us, for forgiveness helps us to create a bond of love on a character level of the Creator God.

Matthew 6:12-15 [New King James] *“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. ‘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.’”*

This is how much the Creator God wants us to forgive others.

We will not be part of His created family unless we learn to forgive others!

It is tough to forgive others!

Offences can hurt!

Maybe the offender is **not** sorry!

But we can with the help of the Creator God still forgive, whatever the circumstances.

Deal with offences immediately –

Ephesians 4:26 [New King James] *“‘Be angry, and do not sin’: do not let the sun go down on your wrath,”*

Forgiving is **not** natural, it takes time to develop mercy.

Start as soon as the offence occurs, it is easier to forgive someone if we do **not** “stew over” what the person did.

Catch yourself before you fall into bitterness, hard-heartedness or pride.

If the offender is **not** aware that they offended, humbly tell them of their error.

Pray for the right attitude and approach.

Matthew 18:15-16 [New King James] *“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. 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.’”*

When we read this we also need to read **Matthew 18:21-35** showing we need to be focussing on our own sinful attitude before we confront another person with their offence against us.

This will remind us of the great mercy the Creator God has toward us.

If we remember the need we have for the Creator God's mercy, we will be happier to extend mercy to all who offend us.

Ecclesiastes 7:20-22 [New King James] *“For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin. Also do not take to heart everything people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you. For many times, also, your own heart has known that even you have cursed others.”*

We are to beware of focussing on the offences of others while forgetting our own.

Revenge has no place in our lives –

Romans 12:19-21 [New King James] *“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*

Vengeance belongs **only** to our merciful, all-knowing Creator God, in fact our approach should be the very opposite.

Personal revenge brings misunderstanding that can lead to hatred.

You can become a bitter, lonely person if you have not learnt to forgive and forget.

Matthew 5:43-48 [New King James] *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”*

Meditating on these words of Jesus Christ our Saviour will help when we find it difficult to forgive.

Jesus Christ is actually saying that we should be praying to God that He will forgive the sin that the person has committed that caused us offence, and that He will continue to bless them by allowing the light of the gospel message of the love of God to continue to shine on them, until they realise what their sins have done to God and other human beings.

It is this forgiveness on our part that will lead us towards perfection, that is spiritual maturity.

With this forgiving attitude of mind we are gradually becoming a partner with the Creator God in forgiveness.

We continue to remember the offences of others because we choose to –

1 Peter 4:8 [New King James] *“And above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’”*

The love that is one of the “fruits” of an active presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives will “cover” or hide from our memory the offences of many people if we allow it to act in that way.

The Greek word translated “love” in **Galatians 5:22-23** is “*agapé*” which is a spontaneous love irrespective of the “rights” or response of the recipient, a sacrificial love that puts aside personal desires to love the object of that love.

God’s love is always expressed in this way.

Forgiveness is for giving and receiving –

2 Corinthians 5:17-20 [New King James] *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and **has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.** Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”*

Jesus Christ has called all Christians to participate in His work of forgiveness that leads to reconciliation.

As ambassadors we are to reflect and represent the forgiveness and reconciliation of all humanity to the Kingdom of God which we all represent as Christians right now.

Mark 11:25 [New King James] *“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.”*

Remembering this will help us to forgive and become reconciled to all who may have offended us.

Colossians 3:12-14 [New King James] *“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.”*

Each day of our lives we will have opportunities to forgive and be forgiven.

Look on such situations as opportunities to exercise the Creator God’s attitude toward those who offend us.

Matthew 5:48 [New King James] *“Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”*

Perfection or maturity is the end goal of every true Christian and learning to forgive the offences of others, by extending “*agapé*” love to them, is a major step toward the mature life that is essential if we are to be accepted by a loving and merciful Creator God into His family of created children who have the same characteristics as He has.