

Forgiveness

⇒ Introduction:

- One of the greatest attributes a Christian can have is a forgiving heart.
 - To forgive is simply to pardon, or to overlook an offense by another and **treat** the offender as **not guilty**.
 - God was the first to forgive and set the example for us.

⇒ I. GOD FORGIVING MAN

- The first act of forgiveness was when God forgave Adam and Eve for their disobedience and provided a way for them to regain their salvation.
 - From then forward, through 4,000 years of Old Testament times, God was consistent in forgiving those sinners who repented and were obedient.
 - From the Jews as a nation in and out of apostasy, to individuals such as Moses, David, Jonah, Samson, and Abraham, who together were guilty of murder, disobedience, adultery, fornication and lying.
- Fortunately, His longsuffering has continued through the Church Age for almost 2,000 more years as God still provides a way for the lost, as well as the saved who have strayed, to be reconciled back to Himself through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - **See 1 John 2:1-2.**
- Thank God He is still forgiving today!
 - Thank God the Lord Jesus Christ loved us enough to suffer, and bleed and die for us, that we through Him, may find forgiveness for our sins.
 - Even after all the pain and suffering Jesus went through, His prayer from the cross in behalf of those who crucified Him was forgiveness!
 - **“...Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do...” (Luke 23:34)**
- And today He is still forgiving!!
 - **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)**
- Notice the word **all**.
 - Isn't it great to know that when God forgives a repentant heart, that every last one of those sins are covered, not just a few of them?
 - God takes it a step further when He promises that forgiveness is eternal and we can **know** that we have eternal life.
 - Do you know for sure you are saved?
- **See 1 John 5:12-13.**
 - So, God's people can take great comfort in knowing that His forgiveness, through Christ, is complete and that they have eternal home in heaven.
 - **“And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:” (Col. 2:10)**

⇒ II. MAN FORGIVING MAN

- When it comes to man forgiving man, we find that for the most part, man is far from being as forgiving as God.
 - However, when God gave instructions on prayer He said:
 - **“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” (Mt. 6:12)**

- If God forgives us **AS** we forgive our debtors, then we are going to receive the same medicine we dish out to others when it comes to forgiveness!!
- That's certainly an encouragement to be a little more longsuffering with others, isn't it??
- This verse does not apply to present day salvation, but there is a point here.
- And just in case you missed the point, Jesus made it plain to those he told:
 - **See Mt. 6:14-15.**
 - **And** "For he shall have judgment **without mercy**, that hath **shewed no mercy**; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment." (**James 2:13**)
 - There's another case you better be glad you are a New Testament Saint!
- Now it's hard to be any plainer than that and we used those verses to show you how serious God was about us forgiving others!
 - Of course, the "**forgive to be forgiven**" aspect here is doctrinally under the Old Testament covenant and not a requirement for Church Age salvation where you are saved by faith.
 - But it is has spiritual application in the Church Age.
 - Your unforgiving heart can affect your **fellowship with God**.
 - The point is, God obviously wants us to be forgiving and show mercy to our fellow man.
 - "**...Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,...**" (**James 2:8**)
- Not only does our Lord want us to be quick to forgive others, but He wants to do it over and over if necessary as evidenced by His reply to Peter.
 - **See Mt. 18:21-22.**
- Another scripture on forgiving men:
 - **See Eph. 4:31-32.**
 - So be careful how you judge others and be quick to forgive as you would have people forgive you.

⇒ III. **FORGIVING YOURSELF**

- The part of forgiveness that many have a considerable problem with is forgiving themselves.
 - Many times in life we do something that we know is terribly wrong and although one may go to God and ask for forgiveness, it's almost like we feel that we do not deserve to be forgiven.
 - Have you been there and felt that way?
 - Most have at one time or another.
 - Problem is, this is a direct contradiction, not only of Scripture but of God's very nature.
 - God said if we would confess a thing as sin, that He would forgive us!
 - "**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**" (**1 John 1:9**)
- So, for us to assume that a particular sin of ours is too evil even for God to forgive is the same, as calling God a liar!
 - If our Lord is willing to forgive even the most terrible sin imaginable, then we must learn to put that sin behind us and move on in our Christian life.

- No one who is moping around feeling guilty for sin already confessed is of any use to the cause of Christ!
- So put it behind you and move forward as a soldier of Christ.
- David set a good example for us in this respect in **II Samuel 12:21-23** concerning the death of his child, which was a result of his own sin.
 - **See II Samuel 12:21-23.**
- David felt guilty because of the child's death was caused by his own.
 - However, he repented of that sin and fervently asked for forgiveness, vowing to proclaim the Lord's righteousness.
 - In other words, David knew it was over and done with, and after asking God's forgiveness he forgave himself.
 - He then promised to serve God.
 - **See Psalms 51:1-15.**
- With that David wisely put it all behind him and God blessed him with another child, Solomon, "**and the Lord loved him.**"
 - So remember, if you are saved, forgive yourself after confessing your sin!
 - It has already been paid for on the cross!

⇒ **IV. MAN FORGIVING GOD**

- It may sound crazy and disrespectful to some for a person to be mad at God or to hold a grudge against Him.
 - However, there are those who blame God for some past misfortune or tragedy in their life.
 - In fact, many people get a little mad at God every now and then, even knowing that God is always right, and always knows best.
- It's easy to blame God for our troubles when, in reality, we bring most of our problems on ourselves.
 - If a person is saved, that person is the blood-bought child of God and every thing that happens in that persons' life is either directed by God or He simply allows it to happen.
 - He may allow it to happen based on the rule of "**reaping and sowing**" as chastisement for sin, or He may allow problems, or even tragedy, to enter our lives so that we may learn and grow to be a better Christians.
- **Much of this life is a training ground to help Christians grow in grace and develop spiritually, that with that experience we may help others while Christ gets the glory.**
 - So it is foolish for us to be mad at God for something in our life that we think is unfair or undeserving.
 - God may simply be preparing us for something special in the future that we could not accomplish without having gone through some rough times first.
 - Place your trust in Him and be confident that nothing will happen that He does not allow.
- The greatest Christian that ever lived, the Apostle Paul, was given a thorn in the flesh that God would not remove but left there for a reason.
 - **See II Cor. 12:7-10.**
- The difference in Paul and many people, is that he did not hold a grudge against God because of his problem.

- He forgave God, realizing it was in his best interest, and continued on with the course set before him.
- Thank God he did, because Paul was the apostle God chose to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.
 - Because of his faithfulness in the face of that and many other trials, tribulations, and hardships, millions have received Jesus Christ as Saviour, and were born again as a result.
 - He was “stoned” by unbelievers, thrown in jail when innocent, shipwrecked and more, yet he forgave God and submitted to His will on every occasion, eventually giving his life for his Lord.
 - What a tremendous example for you and I to live by!