

FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER LIKE GOD

Text: Eph. 4:31-32; Col. 3: 12-13

Introduction:

- I. [Briefly tell the story of **Uncle Marvin's murder**]
 - A. How does a **mother** forgive the man who murders her **oldest son**?
 - B. How does a **wife** forgive the man who takes from her the **beloved companion of her youth**?
 - C. How do **brothers** and **sisters, aunts** and **uncles, friends** and **neighbors**, and **six-year-old boys** forgive?
- II. But that story is **just one tragic illustration** among thousands
 - A. How does a **husband** forgive an **unfaithful wife**?
 - B. How does a **wife** forgive an **abusive husband**?
 - C. How do **parents** forgive the **drunk driver** who kills their only child?
 - D. How does a **Christian** forgive the brother who **swindles** him out of his life's savings?
 - E. How does a **girl** forgive the man who **rapes her**?
 - F. Etc.
- III. Oh, when the **offense is minor**, forgiveness is **relatively easy**, but there are times when **forgiveness** seems to **demand more than we have to give**
- IV. And yet, nothing is **more pointedly discussed** in the word of God than the subject of **forgiveness**
 - A. It is a **command** of God
 1. Lk. 6:37: ³⁷ **“Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.**
 2. This means it's not a **suggestion, a recommendation, or just a piece of good advice**
 3. We cannot **disregard** or **disobey** this command of God and **be pleasing** to Him
 - a. Jas. 2:10-12: ¹⁰ For whoever shall **keep the whole law**, and yet **stumble in one point**, he is **guilty of all**. ¹¹ For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹² So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.

B. It is a **prerequisite** to receiving forgiveness

1. Mt. 6:12-15: ¹² And **forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.** ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ “For **if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.** ¹⁵ But **if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**
2. Mk. 11:25-26: ²⁵ “And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, **forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you** your trespasses. ²⁶ But **if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.**”
3. So **forgiving others** is very **important** and **significant**, because our own **forgiveness** and **salvation** is dependent upon it
4. Of course, in these statements, Jesus takes it for granted that there is **someone** and **something** to forgive
 - a. He doesn't mean that I **can't be forgiven** by God if I have **no one** or **nothing** to forgive
 - 1) It would be a mistake to argue from this passage that **God will not forgive me**, unless I forgive; so if **no one has sinned against me** and I have **no one to forgive**, I **won't be forgiven** by God
 - b. He means that God **will not forgive me** if I am **unwilling to forgive others**
 - c. Furthermore, while these statements teach **truth** about forgiveness, they do not teach the **“whole truth”**

C. It is our **glory** to forgive

1. *Alexander Pope* [English poet and critic]: “Good-nature and good-sense must ever join; To err is human, to forgive, divine.” (*Essay on Criticism*. L. 522)
2. *Alice Cary*: “Nothing in this lost and ruined world bears the meek impress of the Son of God so surely as forgiveness.”
3. *Plautus* [Latin dramatist]: “To love is human, it is also human to forgive.” (*Mercator*, H. 2. 46)
4. Pr. 19:11: ¹¹The **discretion** of a man makes him **slow to anger**, And his **glory** is to **overlook a transgression**.

V. God's word repeatedly commands God's people to **forgive** those who have sinned against them

A. **“Forgive”**

1. *The American Heritage Dictionary*: “...tr. 1. To excuse for a fault or offense; to

pardon. 2. To renounce anger or resentment against. 3. To absolve from payment of. --*intr.* To accord forgiveness....”

2. *Merriam-Websters Collegiate Dictionary*: “**1 a** : to give up resentment of or claim to requital for <*forgive* an insult> **b** : to grant relief from payment of <*forgive* a debt> **2**: to cease to feel resentment against (an offender) : PARDON <*forgive* one’s enemies> verb intransitive : to grant forgiveness....”

VI. Even more than that, God’s word teaches Christians to **forgive one another as God and Christ have forgiven them**

A. Eph. 4:31-32: ³¹ Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. ³² And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, **forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.**

B. Col. 3:12-13: ¹² Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³ 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.**

1. “**Forgiving**” (*chorizomai*)

- a. *BDAG*: “... 3. **to show oneself gracious by forgiving wrongdoing, forgive, pardon**...Eph 4:32ab; Col 3:13ab....” (1078)
- b. *Thayer*: “...often in Grk. writ. fr. Hom. down; *to do something pleasant or agreeable* (to one), *to do a favor to, gratify*...**a.** *univ. to show one’s self gracious, kind, benevolent*.... **b.** *to grant forgiveness, to pardon*: 2 Co. 2:7; with a dat. of the pers., Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13.... **c.** *to give graciously, give freely, bestow*....
- c. *Vine*: “‘to bestow a favor unconditionally,’ is used of the act of ‘forgiveness,’ whether divine, Eph. 4:32; Col. 2:13; 3:13; or human, Luke 7:42, 43 (debt); 2 Cor. 2:7, 10; 12:13; Eph. 4:32 (1st mention).” (2:250)

VII. So **forgiving** one another is one of our **one another obligations**

A. It is an extremely important obligation because, even though we are “**members one of another**” in the body of Christ, we don’t always **treat each other as we should**

1. We **say things** and **do things** that we shouldn’t
2. We **fail to do things** we should

B. Therefore, we not only **need forgiveness** but we also **need to forgive**

1. Certainly this is the case in **our homes**
2. It is also the case in the **local church**

C. Furthermore, we need to forgive one another **in the same way** that God has forgiven us

VIII. What does that mean? To answer that question, I want to explore the concept of **Forgiving One Another Like God?**

Body:

I. **God Forgives Willingly; Therefore We Must Forgive Willingly**

A. God is always **ready** and **willing** to forgive

1. Neh. 9:16-17: ¹⁶ “But they and our fathers acted proudly, Hardened their necks, And did not heed Your commandments. ¹⁷ They refused to obey, And they were not mindful of Your wonders That You did among them. But they hardened their necks, And in their rebellion They appointed a leader To return to their bondage. But You are God, **Ready to pardon, Gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, Abundant in kindness**, And did not forsake them.
2. Psa. 86:5: ⁵ For You, Lord, are **good**, and **ready to forgive**, And **abundant in mercy** to all those who call upon You.
3. God does not **dispense forgiveness** with a **teaspoon** or an **eye-dropper**
4. Like the **loving father** in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, God is always **looking** and **longing** for His lost children to come home
 - a. Lk. 15:20-24: ²⁰ “And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father **saw him** and **had compassion**, and **ran** and **fell on his neck** and **kissed him**. ²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the **best robe** and put it on him, and put **a ring** on his hand and **sandals** on his feet. ²³ And bring the **fatted calf** here and kill it, and let us **eat** and **be merry**; ²⁴ for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to be merry.

B. Therefore, to **forgive like God**, we must always be **ready** and **willing** to forgive

1. Forgiveness must begin with the **right attitude**

- a. As the **offended party**, we must always be **ready and willing to forgive**
- b. We must have a “**forgiving spirit**” regardless of what the offender does or does not do
 - 1) **Jesus**
 - a) Lk. 23:34: ³⁴ Then Jesus said, “**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.**” And they divided His garments and cast lots.
 - 2) **Stephen**

- a) Acts 7:60: ⁶⁰ Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, **“Lord, do not charge them with this sin.”** And when he had said this, he fell asleep.
- 3) **Paul**
- a) 2 Tim. 4:16: ¹⁶ At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. **May it not be charged against them.**
- c. Regardless of what the offender does or does not do, we must not:
- 1) Harbor **hatred, malice, bitterness, or uncontrolled anger** in our hearts
- a) 1 Cor. 14:20: ²⁰ Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, **in malice be babes**, but in understanding be mature.
- b) Eph. 4:26-27: ²⁶ “Be angry, and do not sin”: **do not let the sun go down on your wrath,** ²⁷ nor give place to the devil.
- c) Eph. 4:31-32: ³¹ Let all **bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking** be put away from you, with **all malice.** ³² And be **kind** to one another, **tenderhearted, forgiving** one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.
- d) Col. 3:8: ⁸ But now you yourselves are to put off all these: **anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy,** filthy language out of your mouth.
- e) 1 Jn. 3:15: ¹⁵ **Whoever hates his brother is a murderer,** and you know that **no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.**
- 2) Seek **revenge** or **retaliation**
- a) Pr. 24:29: ²⁹ Do not say, “I will **do to him just as he has done to me;** I will **render to the man according to his work.**”
- b) Rom. 12:17-19: ¹⁷ **Repay no one evil for evil.** Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. ¹⁹ Beloved, **do not avenge yourselves,** but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.
- c) 1 Pet. 3:8-9: ⁸ Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; ⁹ **not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing,** knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.
- d. We must **treat even our enemies** as we would want to be treated
- 1) Mt. 5:43-48: ⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’” ⁴⁴ 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, ⁴⁵ 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. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? ⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

- 2) Pr. 24:17-18: ¹⁷ **Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles;** ¹⁸ Lest the LORD see it, and it displease Him, And He turn away His wrath from him.
- 3) Pr. 25:21-22: ²¹ **If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;** ²² For so you will heap coals of fire on his head, And the LORD will reward you.
- 4) Rom. 12:14: ¹⁴ **Bless those who persecute you;** bless and do not curse.
- 5) Rom. 12:17: ¹⁷ Repay no one **evil for evil.** Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.
- 6) Rom. 12:20-21: ²⁰ 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.” ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

e. Objection: “He **must repent!**”

- 1) Lk. 17:3-4: ³ Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and **if he repents, forgive him.** ⁴ And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.”
- 2) Yes, a sinner must repent, but whether he **repents or not**, we must have the **proper attitude** toward him
- 3) Whether he **repents or not**, we must treat him **right!!!**
- 4) Furthermore, we should **want him to repent** so there can be **forgiveness** instead of hoping he doesn't repent so we can continue to **hold a grudge**

f. Objection: “But I just don't **feel** like forgiving him!”

- 1) Forgiveness is an **obligation**
 - a) Lk. 17:3-4: ³ Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and **if he repents, forgive him.** ⁴ And if he sins

against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.”

- b) The apostles’ **request**
 - 1] Lk. 17:5: ⁵ And the apostles said to the Lord, “**Increase our faith.**”
- c) Christ’s **response**
 - 1] Lk. 17:6-10: ⁶ So the Lord said, “**If you have faith as a mustard seed**, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you. ⁷ And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘**Come at once and sit down to eat**’? ⁸ But will he not rather say to him, ‘**Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink**’? ⁹ Does he **thank that servant** because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. ¹⁰ So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘**We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.**’”
 - 2] The problem is not a **lack of faith**
 - 3] The problem is a **matter of obedience**
- d) Forgiveness is not dependent upon **our emotions** or **our feelings**
- e) It must be **practiced regardless of emotion**
- g. Objection: “But I don’t want to be a **hypocrite!**”
 - 1) We wrongly equate **hypocrisy** with **acting against our feelings and emotions**
 - 2) It is **not necessarily hypocritical** to act **contrary to one’s emotions**
 - a) **God** acts contrary to His emotions
 - 1] Psa. 78:36-38: ³⁶ Nevertheless they flattered Him with their mouth, And they lied to Him with their tongue; ³⁷ For their heart was not steadfast with Him, Nor were they faithful in His covenant. ³⁸ But He, being full of compassion, **forgave their iniquity**, And did not destroy them. Yes, many a time He **turned His anger away**, And **did not stir up all His wrath**;
 - 2] Psa. 85:1-3: ¹ LORD, You have been favorable to Your land; You have brought back the captivity of Jacob. ² You have

forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin. Selah ³ You have **taken away all Your wrath**; You have **turned from the fierceness of Your anger**.

- 3] He was ready to **destroy the Israelites at Mt. Sinai**, but He turned His anger away (Ex. 32:7-14)
- 4] He was ready once again to **destroy the Israelites at Kadesh-barnea**, and again He turned His anger away (Num. 14:11-20)

- b) The command to **love our enemies runs counter to our emotions** (Mt. 5:43-48), and yet we must love them

2. Forgiveness ends with the **right action**

- a. Note: In the final analysis, **only God can forgive a man of the guilt of sin**

- 1) Our forgiveness does not remit sin
- 2) Our forgiveness **restores the offender to our fellowship**
 - a) One may be **forgiven by God** and **not by his fellowman**
 - b) One may be **forgiven by his fellowman** and **not by God**

- b. If one **repents** and **asks** for our forgiveness, we must treat him as **righteous**

- 1) Lk. 17:3-4: ³ Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and **if he repents, forgive him**. ⁴ And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘**I repent,**’ you shall **forgive him**.”
- 2) Now, if he **refuses to repent**, we cannot treat him as **righteous** because he is **not righteous** (Mt. 18:15-17; Eph. 5:11), but we must treat him **right**
- 3) I’m going to have **more to say** about this later in our study

3. What if **God** were as **willing to forgive us** as we are willing to forgive one another?

- a. How sad it is that all too often we **forgive the sinner** only after he has **“crawled down the aisle over broken glass”**

4. If we are to forgive others as God has forgiven us, we must forgive **willingly**

II. **God Forgives Unreservedly; Therefore We Must Forgive Unreservedly**

- A. There are **no sins too heinous** for God to forgive

- 1. He forgave **David**

- a. David **broke five of the Ten Commandments** in his sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:1-27)
 - 1) He broke the **10th commandment** by **coveting** his neighbor's wife (Ex. 20:17)
 - 2) He broke the **7th commandment** by **committing adultery** with Bathsheba (Ex. 20:14)
 - 3) He broke the **9th commandment** by **bearing false witness** in an attempt to cover up his sin (Ex. 20:16)
 - 4) He broke the **6th commandment** by **killing** Uriah with the sword of the Ammonites (Ex. 20:13)
 - 5) He broke the **8th commandment** by **stealing** his neighbor's wife (Ex. 20:15)
 - b. Yet **God forgave him**
 - 1) 2 Sam. 12:13: ¹³ So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has **put away your sin**; you shall not die.
2. He forgave **Peter**
 - a. Though Peter swore that he would **never deny the Lord**, he did (Mt. 26:31-35, 69-75)
 - b. But **God forgave him**
 - 1) Lk. 22:31-34: ³¹ And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. ³² But **I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.**" ³³ But he said to Him, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death." ³⁴ Then He said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me."
 - 2) Mk. 16:7: ⁷ But go, tell His disciples—**and Peter**—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you."
 3. He forgave **Saul of Tarsus**
 - a. Though Saul **grievously persecuted** the church
 - 1) Acts 8:1-3: ¹ Now **Saul was consenting to his death**. At that time a **great persecution** arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. ² And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. ³ As for Saul, **he made**

havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

- 2) Acts 26:9-11: ⁹ “Indeed, I myself thought I must **do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.** ¹⁰ This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I **shut up in prison**, having received authority from the chief priests; and **when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.** ¹¹ And I **punished them often** in every synagogue and **compelled them to blaspheme**; and being **exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.**

b. **God forgave him**

- 1) 1 Cor. 15:9-10: ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because **I persecuted the church of God.** ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.
- 2) 1 Tim. 1:12-17: ¹² And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, ¹³ although I was formerly a **blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man**; but **I obtained mercy** because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. ¹⁴ And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.** ¹⁶ However, for this reason **I obtained mercy**, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. ¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

- a) Christ **forgave Saul** to demonstrate His willingness to **forgive anyone**

4. He forgave the **Corinthians**

a. They were guilty of the **most contemptible crimes**

- 1) 1 Cor. 6:9-11: ⁹ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither **fornicators**, nor **idolaters**, nor **adulterers**, nor **homosexuals**, nor **sodomites**, ¹⁰ nor **thieves**, nor **covetous**, nor **drunkards**, nor **revilers**, nor **extortioners** will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And **such were some of you.** But you were **washed**, but you were **sanctified**, but you were **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

b. Yet **God forgave them**

5. There is **no sin so black**, there is **no deed so dastardly**, that it is **beyond the pale** of God's forgiveness
 - a. Col. 2:13: ¹³ And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having **forgiven you all trespasses**,
- B. Therefore, to **forgive like God**, there must be **no sin beyond the pale** of our forgiveness
1. The **earliest Christians** had to learn to **forgive terrible sins**
 - a. **Mary** had to forgive her countrymen who **crucified her Son** and then later became Christians on Pentecost (Acts 1:14; 2:36-42)
 - b. The church in Jerusalem had to **forgive Saul of Tarsus** when he became a Christian (Acts 9:26-28), even though he had:
 - 1) Consented to **Stephen's stoning** (Acts 7:57-59; 8:1)
 - 2) **Imprisoned** and **beat** Christians (Acts 8:3; 9:1-2, 21; 22:19)
 - a) Some of those Christians may have borne **the scars** of those beatings for the rest of their lives
 - 3) **Killed** Christians (Acts 9:21; 22:4; 26:9-11)
 - a) Some of those Christians had **lost family members** at Saul's command
 - b) All of them had **lost brothers and sisters** in Christ at Saul's command
 - 4) Tried to **destroy the church** (Gal. 1:13)
 2. There must be **no crimes beyond the pale of our forgiveness**
 3. Objection: "It's **too hard!** What he did was **too bad**; it hurt me **too much!**"
 - a. Imagine the **worst possible thing** that someone could do to you
 - 1) **Rape**
 - 2) **Robbery**
 - 3) **Ruin**
 - 4) **Murder**
 - 5) Etc.
 - b. Whatever it is, it **cannot compare** with what **you've done** to your Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ

1) Isn't that the point of the **Parable of the Unmerciful Servant**? Mt. 18:21-35

a) The **significant elements** in the story:

- 1] The king = **God**
- 2] His servants = **You & me**
- 3] 10,000-talent debt = **Our sins** against God
- 4] 100-denarii debt = **Other's sins** against us
- 5] Forgiven debt = **God's forgiveness** of our sins
- 6] Unforgiven debt = **Our failure to forgive** others

b) The **disparity** of the two debts

- 1] 1 talent = **6,000** denarii
- 2] 10,000 talents = **60,000,000** denarii
- 3] 1 denarius = **Days wage** (Mt. 20:2)
- 4] 100 denarii = **100 days** wages
- 5] 10,000 talents = **60,000,000 days** wages

c) Let's try to put all of this into a **better perspective**

- 1] *John Broadus*: "We may see how vast the sum is by comparisons. The amount provided by David for building the temple was **three thousand talents of gold**, and **seven thousand of silver**, and the princes gave over **five thousand talents of gold** and **ten thousand of silver** (1 Chron. 29:4, 7), and the amount which Haman offered the King of Persia, for the destruction of the Jews, was **ten thousand talents of silver**. (Ester 3:9.)" (Bold emphasis added, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 391)
- 2] *David Turner & Darrell L. Bock*: "A **talent** was probably worth around **6,000 drachmas** (17:24) or **denarii** (20:2ff; BDAG 988). A laborer was paid a **denarius a day** (20:2), so if this is taken lit. a laborer would have to work **60,000,000 days** or roughly **193,000 years** (60,000,000 days divided by 310 work days a year) to earn this much money! But the figure ('10,000'; Gr. *mupioi*) here is hyperbolic; Danker (BDAG 661) suggests the English slang '**zillions**' to translate it (cf. the large amounts found in 1 Chr 29:3-7 and Josephus *Antiquities* 17.320). What is meant is **an incalculably large amount** in contrast to the amount owed this servant by his fellow servant

in 18:28.” (Bold emphasis added, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Matthew and Mark*, 11:242-243)

- 3] *William Barclay*: “The first servant owed his master **10,000 talents**....The **total revenue** of the province which contained Idumaea, Judaea and Samaria was only **600 talents**; the total revenue of even a wealthy province like Galilee was only **300 talents**. Here was a debt which was greater than a **king’s ransom**. It was this that the servant was forgiven.

“The debt which a fellow-servant owed him was a trifling thing...It was approximately **one five-hundred-thousandth** of his own debt.

“R. S. Kennedy drew this vivid picture to contrast the debts. Suppose they were paid in **sixpences**. The **100 denarii debt** could be carried in **one pocket**. The **ten thousand [sic] talent debt** would take to carry it an army of about **8,600 carriers**, each carrying a sack of sixpences **60 lbs.** in weight; and they would form, at a distance of a yard apart, **a line five miles long!**” (*The Gospel Of Matthew*, Vol. 2, p. 194)

2) [Read “I’m The One,”]

4. Objection: “God can **forgive anything**; but I just can’t!”
- a. Do you think that it’s **easy for God to forgive**?
- 1) Do you think it was easy for God to **say no** when Jesus prayed so earnestly in the garden of Gethsemane that **the cup might pass from Him**? (Mt. 26: 36-46)
- 2) When Jesus cried out in agony on the cross: “**My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?**” (Mt. 27:46) and **heaven was silent**, do you think that it was **easy for God to turn His back upon His Son**?
- b. It’s **not easy for God to forgive**
- 1) It cost Him **His Son**!
- 2) He must **turn His anger away** (Psa. 78:36-38; 85:1-3)
5. If we are to forgive others as God has forgiven us, we must forgive **unreservedly**

III. God Forgives Immediately; Therefore We Must Forgive Immediately

A. When God forgives, He forgives **without any delay**

1. As soon as **David** confessed his sin, the prophet Nathan pronounced his forgiveness

- a. 2 Sam. 12:13: ¹³ So David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” And Nathan said to David, “**The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.**”
 - b. Psa. 32:5: ⁵ I **acknowledged** my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, “I will **confess** my transgressions to the LORD,” And **You forgave the iniquity of my sin.** Selah
2. When **the Ninevites** repented at the preaching of the prophet Jonah, God forgave them immediately
- a. Jon. 3:4-10: ⁴ And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day’s walk. Then he cried out and said, “**Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!**” ⁵ So the people of Nineveh **believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth,** from the greatest to the least of them. ⁶ Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and **laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes.** ⁷ And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. ⁸ But let man and beast be **covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God;** yes, let every one **turn from his evil way** and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹ Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish? ¹⁰ Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and **God relented** from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and **He did not do it.**
3. Jesus assured Peter of **God’s forgiveness when he “turn[ed] again,”** even as He prophesied his sin
- a. Lk. 22:31-34: ³¹ And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. ³² But **I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.**” ³³ But he said to Him, “Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.” ³⁴ Then He said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.”
 - b. Mk. 16:7: ⁷But go, tell His disciples—**and Peter**—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.”
4. The father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son **forgave his boy instantly**
- a. Lk. 15:20-24: ²⁰ “And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father **saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.** ²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the **best robe** and put it on him, and put **a ring** on his hand and **sandals** on his feet.

²³ And bring the **fatted calf** here and kill it, and let us **eat and be merry**; ²⁴ for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to be merry.

- b. That boy had **his confession all planned out**, and I suspect that he **said it repeatedly** to himself as he made his long journey home
- c. But before he had a **chance to say a word**, his father **ran to him** and **embraced him**

B. Therefore, to **forgive like God**, we too must forgive **without delay**

- 1. Lk. 17:4: ⁴ And if he sins against you **seven times in a day**, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, **‘I repent,’** you shall **forgive him.**”
- 2. Objection: “He’s got to bring forth **fruit** worthy of repentance!”
 - a. Mt. 3:8: ⁸ Therefore **bear fruits** worthy of repentance,
 - b. Acts 26:20: ²⁰ but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and **do works** befitting repentance.
 - c. It takes **time** to bring forth **fruit**
 - d. Christ’s statement (Lk. 17:3-4) **precludes waiting**
 - 1) There would be **no time to see the fruit of repentance** if a man sinned against us seven times in a day
 - e. **Does God wait to forgive us** until He sees fruit worthy of repentance?
 - f. It is the **offender’s** responsibility to **bring forth fruit worthy of repentance**. It is the **offended’s** obligation to **forgive**
- 3. If we are to forgive others as God has forgiven us, we must forgive **immediately**
 - a. 2 Cor. 2:6-8: ⁶ This **punishment** which was inflicted by the majority is **sufficient** for such a man, ⁷ so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to **forgive and comfort** him, lest perhaps such a one be **swallowed up with too much sorrow**. ⁸ Therefore I urge you to **reaffirm your love** to him.

IV. God Forgives Completely; Therefore We Must Forgive Completely

A. When God forgives a sinner, He forgives him **fully** and **wholly**

- 1. He **removes our transgressions** from us as far as the **east** is from the **west**
 - a. Psa. 103:12: ¹² As far as **the east** is from **the west**, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.
- 2. Though our **sins** be as **scarlet**, He makes them as **white as snow**

- a. Isa. 1:18: ¹⁸ “Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the LORD, “Though your sins are **like scarlet**, They shall be as **white as snow**; Though they are **red like crimson**, They shall be as **wool**.
3. He casts all our sins **behind His back**
 - a. Isa. 38:17: ¹⁷ Indeed it was for my own peace That I had great bitterness; But You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, For You have **cast all my sins behind Your back**.
 4. He **blots out** our transgressions
 - a. Isa. 44:21-22: ²¹ “Remember these, O Jacob, And Israel, for you are My servant; I have formed you, you are My servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me! ²² I have **blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions**, And **like a cloud, your sins**. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.”
 - b. Acts 3:19: ¹⁹ Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be **blotted out**, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,
 5. He **cleanses** us of **all iniquity**
 - a. Jer. 33:8: ⁸ I will **cleans** them from **all their iniquity** by which they have sinned against Me, and I will **pardon all their iniquities** by which they have sinned and by which they have transgressed against Me.
 6. He casts our sins into the **depths of the sea**
 - a. Mic. 7:18-19: ¹⁸ Who is a God like You, **Pardoning iniquity** And **passing over the transgression** of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He **delights in mercy**. ¹⁹ He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will **cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea**.
 - b. Now, think about just **how deep** the ocean really is
 - 1) “Its average depth is **3,790 metres (12,430 ft)**, and its maximum depth is **10,923 metres (6.787 mi)** Nearly half of the world's marine waters are over **3,000 metres (9,800 ft)** deep.” (“Ocean,” Wikipedia)
 - 2) “The **Mariana Trench** is the **deepest part of the world's oceans**. It is located in the western Pacific Ocean, to the east of the Mariana Islands. The trench is about 2,550 kilometres (1,580 mi) long but has a mean width of only 69 kilometres (43 mi). It reaches a **maximum-known depth** of about **10.91 kilometres (6.78 mi)** at the Challenger Deep, a small slot-shaped valley in its floor, at its southern end, although some unrepeated measurements place the deepest portion at **11.03 kilometres (6.85 mi)**. If **Mount Everest**, the highest mountain on Earth at **8,850 metres (29,040 ft)**, was set in the deepest part of the Mariana Trench,

there would be **2,060 metres (6,760 ft)** of water left above it.” (“Mariana Trench,” Wikipedia)

- B. Therefore, to **forgive like God**, we too must forgive **fully** and **wholly**
1. Forgiveness ought to **restore the relationship**
 2. The offender should be **treated as though he had not sinned**
 - a. No **probation**
 - b. No **humiliation**
 - c. No **strings attached**
 - d. Etc.
 3. Question: “After one has been forgiven, must everything be **exactly as it was** before the offense???”
 - a. The person must be considered as **righteous**
 - 1) Psa. 85:2: ²You have **forgiven** the iniquity of Your people; You have **covered** all their sin. Selah
 - 2) Ezek. 33:14-16: ¹⁴Again, when I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, ¹⁵if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ¹⁶None of his sins which he has committed shall be **remembered against him**; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live.
 - 3) Acts 13:38-39: ³⁸Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the **forgiveness** of sins; ³⁹and by Him everyone who believes is **justified** from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.
 - a) **“Justify”**: To pronounce **“Not Guilty!”**
 - 4) Rom. 4:7-8: ⁷“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are **forgiven**, And whose sins are **covered**; ⁸Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall **not impute sin.**”
 - b. But that doesn’t necessarily mean that **everything must be exactly as it was** before the offense
 - 1) There may be **consequences** that have to be borne (**complete forgiveness** does not always remove **painful consequences**)
 - a) Although God forgave **the Israelites**, He took vengeance upon them

- 1] Psa. 99:8: ⁸You answered them, O Lord our God; You were to them God-Who-Forgives, Though You **took vengeance** on their deeds.
- b) Although **Moses** was forgiven (Mt. 17:1-7; Heb. 11:24-29), he still was not allowed to **enter the Promised Land** (Num. 20: 10-13; 27:12-14; Dt. 1:34-40; 3:23-28)
- c) Although **David** was forgiven (2 Sam. 12: 13), there were **terrible consequences** that he had to live with for the rest of his life
- 1] 2 Sam. 12:10-14: ¹⁰ Now therefore, **the sword shall never depart from your house**, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’ ¹¹ Thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, **I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun.**’ ¹² For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.’ ” ¹³ So David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” And Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. ¹⁴ However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, **the child also who is born to you shall surely die.**”
- d) *Etc.*
- 2) There may be **especially strong temptations** to avoid
- a) A **store clerk** must be forgiven of embezzlement if he repents, and yet it might not be **wise** or **expedient** for him to **keep his job**
- 3) A **reputation** may need to be rebuilt
- a) A **preacher** who has committed adultery must be forgiven if he repents, but he may not be able to **keep preaching**
- b) An **elder** who has sinned must be forgiven if he repents, but he may be **unqualified to serve as an elder**
- 4) There may be other people’s **rights** to consider
- a) The **“guilty party”** must be forgiven if he repents, but I’m not convinced that **the “innocent party” must take him back**
- 1] There are some **very good reasons** for doing so, and the “innocent party” needs to **carefully consider these**
- 2] But I do not believe that **the repentance of the “guilty party”** necessarily means that **the “innocent party” cannot exercise**

the God-given right of divorce (Mt. 19:9)

5) I may be **inconsistent** here, and if so, I am certainly willing for someone to **teach me “the way of God more accurately”** (Acts 18:26)

4. If we are to forgive others as God has forgiven us, we must forgive **completely**

V. **God Forgives Permanently; Therefore We Must Forgive Permanently**

A. When God forgives a sinner, he forgives him **forever**

1. He remembers our sin **no more**

- a. Jer. 31:33-34: ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For **I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.**”
- b. Heb. 8:10-12: ¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ¹¹ None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. ¹² For **I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.**”
- c. Heb. 10:15-17: ¹⁵ But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, ¹⁶ “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,” ¹⁷ then He adds, “**Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.**”

2. He remembers our sins **against us no more**

- a. Ezek. 33:14-16: ¹⁴ Again, when I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, ¹⁵ if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ¹⁶ None of his sins which he has committed shall be **remembered against him**; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

B. Therefore, to **forgive like God**, we too must forgive **forever**

1. Objection: “I’ll **forgive** you but I won’t **forget** it!” or “I’ll **forgive** you, but I’ll never **let you forget** what you did to me!”

- a. *Henry Ward Beecher* [American clergyman and writer]: “**I can forgive, but I cannot forget,**’ is only another way of saying. ‘**I cannot forgive.**’”
 - b. We either **forgive** or **we don’t!**
2. Question: “Does **forgiveness** require **forgetting**???”
- a. The answer to that question is “**Yes**” and “**No,**” because there are **two ways to remember**: you can **remember** and then you can **REMEMBER** with **gritted teeth** and **clenched fists**
 - b. Forgiveness does not immediately (if ever) **wipe out the memory** of a past wrong
 - 1) Though God **forgave Israel**, He still **remembered their sins**
 - a) I know that because men writing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit **wrote about the sins of God’s people years later** (Neh. 9:9ff; Psa. 78:8ff; Acts 7:38ff; *et al.*)
 - b) This indicates that **God had not forgotten Israel’s history**
 - c. Forgiveness **wipes out the guilt** of a past wrong
 - 1) When God forgives, the offense is no longer **remembered against** the offender
 - a) Ezek. 33:14-16: ¹⁴ Again, when I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, ¹⁵ if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ¹⁶ None of his sins which he has committed shall be **remembered against him**; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live.
 - b) This is what God meant when He said: “for I will forgive their iniquity, and **their sin will I remember no more**” (Jer. 31:34)
 - 2) When we forgive, we must “**bury the hatchet,**” **handle and all**
 - a) We may remember **where** it is, and **why** it’s there, but we don’t go and **dig it up again**
 - 1] We don’t **hold it over the other person’s head**
 - 2] We don’t **bring it up to others**
 - 3] We don’t **dwell on it ourselves**
 - b) *Robert Turner*: “One has not truly forgiven who **buries the hatchet**, but **sets up a marker** so that it may be easily exhumed.” (Bold emphasis added, “The Blessings Of Forgetting,” *Plain Talk*, 4:2:5)

- c) Illust.: “When we have a fight, my wife gets **historical!**”
 - d) We need to be like the wife who, when reminded of an incident in which her husband had greatly embarrassed her, said “**I distinctly remember forgetting that!**”
3. If we are to forgive others as God has forgiven us, we must forgive **permanently**

VI. God Forgives Repeatedly; Therefore We Must Forgive Repeatedly

A. God forgives sinners **over and over again**

1. **God’s forgiving spirit** was manifested over and over again in His dealings with **Israel**
 - a. As the Israelites journeyed from **Egypt** to **Kadesh-barnea**, God forgave them time and time again
 - 1) Num. 14:18-19: ¹⁸ ‘The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.’ ¹⁹ Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have **forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.**”
 - b. As the Israelites wandered in **the wilderness**, God forgave them again and again
 - 1) Neh. 9:16-19: ¹⁶ “But they and our fathers acted proudly, Hardened their necks, And did not heed Your commandments. ¹⁷ They refused to obey, And they were not mindful of Your wonders That You did among them. But they hardened their necks, And in their rebellion They appointed a leader To return to their bondage. But You are God, **Ready to pardon, Gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, Abundant in kindness, And did not forsake them.** ¹⁸ “Even when they made a molded calf for themselves, And said, ‘This is your god That brought you up out of Egypt,’ And worked great provocations, ¹⁹ Yet **in Your manifold mercies You did not forsake them in the wilderness.** The pillar of the cloud did not depart from them by day, To lead them on the road; Nor the pillar of fire by night, To show them light, And the way they should go.
 - 2) Neh. 9:21: ²¹ **Forty years You sustained them in the wilderness;** They lacked nothing; Their clothes did not wear out And their feet did not swell.
 - c. In the time of **the judges**, He forgave Israel again and again
 - 1) Neh. 9:26-27: ²⁶ “Nevertheless they were disobedient And rebelled against You, Cast Your law behind their backs And killed Your

prophets, who testified against them To turn them to Yourself; And they worked great provocations. ²⁷ Therefore You delivered them into the hand of their enemies, Who oppressed them; And in the time of their trouble, When they cried to You, **You heard** from heaven; And according to Your abundant mercies **You gave them deliverers** who saved them From the hand of their enemies.

- 2) Jdg. 2:7: ⁷ So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.
- 3) Jdg. 2:10-14: ¹⁰ When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who **did not know the LORD** nor the work which He had done for Israel. ¹¹ Then the children of Israel **did evil in the sight of the LORD**, and **served the Baals**; ¹² and they **forsook the LORD God** of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they **followed other gods** from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they **provoked the LORD to anger**. ¹³ They **forsook the LORD** and **served Baal and the Ashtoreths**. ¹⁴ And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of **plunderers** who **despoiled** them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies.
- 4) Jdg. 2:16: ¹⁶ Nevertheless, the LORD **raised up judges** who **delivered them** out of the hand of those who plundered them.
- 5) Jdg. 2:19: ¹⁹ And it came to pass, **when the judge was dead**, that they **reverted** and **behaved more corruptly** than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way.
- 6) The Cycle: **Sin, Servitude, Supplication, Salvation, Serenity**

d. Even during **the captivity**, God was **merciful** to His people

- 1) Neh. 9:30-31: ³⁰ Yet for many years **You had patience with them**, And testified against them by Your Spirit in Your prophets. Yet they would not listen; Therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. ³¹ Nevertheless **in Your great mercy You did not utterly consume them nor forsake them**; For You are God, gracious and merciful.

2. **God's forgiving spirit** is manifested over and over again in His dealings with **you and me**

- a. When we **meet His conditions of pardon**, He **forgives us again and again** and again

- 1) 1 Jn. 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 **cleanses us from all unrighteousness**.

B. Therefore, to **forgive like God**, we too must forgive **over and over again**

1. Forgiveness must be granted **as often** as the offender **repents** and **requests** it
 - a. Mt. 18:21-22: ²¹ Then Peter came to Him and said, “**Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?**” ²² Jesus said to him, “**I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.**”
 - b. Lk. 17:3-4: ³ Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴ And **if he sins against you seven times in a day**, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ **you shall forgive him.**”
2. Objection: “But we’ve been through this **so many times** before!”
 - a. How many times have you **asked others to forgive you of the same old sins?**
 - 1) *Horace* [Italian poet]: “It is right for him who asks forgiveness for his offenses to grant it to others” (*Satires*, I.3.74)
3. How many times do we **ask God to forgive us of the same old sins in a day?**
4. If we are to forgive others as God has forgiven us, we must forgive **repeatedly**

VII. God Forgives Conditionally; Therefore We Must Forgive Conditionally

- A. We need to understand that **being willing to forgive** is not the same thing as **granting forgiveness**
- B. God is always **ready to forgive**
 1. Psa. 86:5: ⁵For You, Lord, are good, and **ready to forgive**, And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.
- C. But God **grants forgiveness** only when a sinner **meets His conditions of pardon**
 1. Lev. 26:40-42: ⁴⁰ ‘But **IF** they **confess** their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me, ⁴¹ and that I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies; **IF** their uncircumcised hearts are **humbled**, and they **accept** their guilt— ⁴² **THEN I** will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land.
 2. 2 Chr. 7:14: ¹⁴**IF** My people who are called by My name will **humble**

themselves, and **pray** and **seek** My face, and **turn** from their wicked ways, **THEN** I will **hear** from heaven, and will **forgive** their sin and **heal** their land.

3. 2 Chr. 30:9: ⁹ For **IF** you **return** to the LORD, your brethren and your children will be treated with compassion by those who lead them captive, so that they may come back to this land; for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn His face from you **IF** you **return** to Him.”
4. Pr. 28:13: ¹³ He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever **confesses** and **forsakes** them will have **mercy**.
5. Isa. 55:7: ⁷ Let the wicked **forsake** his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him **return** to the Lord, And He will have **mercy** on him; And to our God, For He will **abundantly pardon**.
6. Ezek. 18:21-23: ²¹ “But **IF** a wicked man **turns** from all his sins which he has committed, **keeps** all My statutes, and **does** what is lawful and right, he shall **surely live**; he shall **not die**. ²² **None of the transgressions** which he has committed **shall be remembered against him**; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall **live**. ²³ Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?” says the Lord GOD, “and not that he should **turn** from his ways and **live**?”
7. Ezek. 33:14-16: ¹⁴ Again, when I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ **IF** he **turns** from his sin and **does** what is lawful and right, ¹⁵ **IF** the wicked **restores** the pledge, **gives back** what he has stolen, and **walks** in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall **surely live**; he shall **not die**. ¹⁶ **None of his sins** which he has committed **shall be remembered against him**; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall **surely live**.
8. Acts 3:19: ¹⁹ “Therefore **repent** and **return**, **SO THAT** your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;
9. 1 Jn. 1:9: ⁹ **IF** we **confess** our sins, He is faithful and just to **forgive** us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

D. Therefore, to **forgive like God**, we too must forgive **conditionally**

1. We must **not forgive** unless the sinner **repents**
2. That’s what Jesus **specifically says**
 - a. Lk. 17:3-4: ³ Take heed to yourselves. If your brother **sins** against you, **rebuke** him; and if he **repents**, **forgive** him. ⁴ And if he **sins** against you **seven times** in a **day**, and **seven times** in a **day** returns to you, saying, ‘**I repent**,’ you shall **forgive** him.”
 - 1) “**Forgive**” (*aphiemi*)

- a) *BDAG*: "...Gener., to cause someone or someth. to undergo separation.... 2. to release from legal or moral obligation or consequence, *cancel, remit, pardon*....Lk 17:3f...." (157)
 - b) *Thayer*: "[fr. Hom. down]; to send from (ἀπό) one's self; 1. to send away.... d. to let go, give up, a debt, by not demanding it... i. e. to remit, forgive....absolutely, ἀφιέναι τινί to forgive one: Mt. 12:32; 18:21, 35; Mk. 4:12; Lk. 11:4; 12:10; 17:3 sq...." (89)
 - c) *Vine*: "primarily, 'to send forth, send away' (*apo*, 'from,' *hiemi*, 'to send'), denotes, besides its other meanings, 'to remit or forgive' (a) debts, Matt. 6:12; 18:27, 32, these being completely cancelled; (b) sins, e.g., Matt. 9:2, 5, 6; 12:31, 32; Acts 8:22 ('the thought of thine heart'); Rom. 4:7; Jas. 5:15; 1 John 1:9; 2:12. In this latter respect the verb, like its corresponding noun... firstly signifies the remission of the punishment due to sinful conduct, the deliverance of the sinner from the penalty divinely, and therefore righteously, imposed; secondly, it involves the complete removal of the cause of offense; such remission is based upon the vicarious and propitiatory sacrifice of Christ. In the OT atoning sacrifice and 'forgiveness' are often associated, e.g., Lev. 4:20, 26.
 "Human 'forgiveness' is to be strictly analogous to divine 'forgiveness,' e.g., Matt. 6:12. If certain conditions are fulfilled, there is no limitation to Christ's law of 'forgiveness,' Matt. 18:21, 22. The conditions are repentance and confession, Matt. 18:15-17; Luke 17:3...." (2:250-251)
- 2) Jesus is not teaching us to forgive **unconditionally**; He is teaching us to forgive **willingly, immediately, and repeatedly** when sinners repent (or say they have repented)
 - a) Jesus said, "**if he repents**, forgive him"
 - b) That little word "**if**" makes this forgiveness **conditional**
 - c) As we have already noted, **God does not forgive unconditionally** (2 Chr. 7:14; Pr. 28:13; Acts 3:19), and Jesus' statement here indicates that He does not expect us to do that either
 - b. While God expects us to always be **ready and willing to forgive**, I don't believe He expects us to forgive someone who **refuses to repent and seek our forgiveness**
- E. Now, I know that many people believe that **a Christian should forgive** those who sin against him **whether they repent or not**
1. That's what many **psychologists, psychiatrists**, and even many **preachers** tell people to do

2. And there are several NT passages that teach us to **forgive** others, and **no conditions are mentioned** in those passages
 - a. Eph. 4:31-32: ³¹ Let all **bitterness, wrath, anger**, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all **malice**. ³² And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, **forgiving** one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.
 - b. (Mt. 6:12, 14-15; 18:21-22; Mk. 11:25-26; Lk. 6:37; 11:4; Col. 3:12-13)
 3. Therefore, they conclude that we must **forgive unconditionally**, no matter what
- F. However, I believe there are **several serious problems** with this view
1. First, it is not forgiving **like God and Christ**
 - a. As I've already shown you, God and Christ **do not forgive** apart from **repentance** and **returning** to Him according to His plan
 - b. So is it really reasonable to believe that they expect a Christian to **do something that they will not do**
 - 1) Job 4:17 (Eliphaz): ¹⁷ 'Can a mortal be **more righteous** than God? Can a man be **more pure** than his Maker?
 2. Second, it overlooks or ignores something that **Jesus says** about forgiveness
 - a. Lk. 17:3-4: ³ Take heed to yourselves. IF your brother **sins** against you, **rebuke** him; and IF he **repents, forgive** him. ⁴ And IF he **sins** against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, '**I repent,**' you shall **forgive** him."
 - b. According to this view, **Jesus should have said**: "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, (**rebuke him and) forgive him.**"
 - c. But that's **not what Jesus says**
 - d. Therefore, this view **only considers part** of what the NT teaches on this subject
 - 1) This is exactly what the advocates of "**faith only salvation**" do when it comes to the subject of conversion
 - 2) They focus on the "**faith passages**" (cf. Rom. 10:9-10), but they ignore (or explain away) the "**baptism passages**" (cf. Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Jn. 3:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27; Eph. 5:25-26; Col. 2:11-13; Tit. 3:4-5; Heb. 10:22; 1 Pet. 3:20-21)
 - e. **All of Scripture** must be **considered** on **any Bible subject** to have the **truth** on that subject

- 1) Psa. 119:160: ¹⁶⁰ **The entirety of Your word is truth**, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.
 - 2) I can't **consider** some passages and **ignore** others on the same subject
 - 3) I've got to use **all of God's puzzle pieces**
- f. All of Scripture must be **harmonized together**
- 1) If I don't consider all that the Bible teaches concerning **God's forgiveness** of sinners, I could draw **erroneous conclusions**
 - a) Based on some Bible passages alone, one could argue that God will **forgive sinners whether we repent or not**
 - 1] Mic. 7:18-19: ¹⁸ Who is a God like You, **Pardoning** iniquity And **passing over** the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. ¹⁹ He will again have **compassion** on us, And will **subdue** our iniquities. You will **cast** all our sins Into the depths of the sea.
 - 2] **No conditions** are mentioned in that passage. Nothing is said about **repentance** and **returning**
 - b) Would it be correct, therefore, to argue from this passage that **God will forgive sinners whether they repent or not?**
 - 1] **No!** This passage must be interpreted in light of other passages that clearly teach that **God's forgiveness is conditioned upon our repentance**
 - a] 2 Chr. 7:14: ¹⁴ **IF** My people who are called by My name will **humble** themselves, and **pray** and **seek** My face, and **turn** from their wicked ways, then I will **hear** from heaven, and will **forgive** their sin and **heal** their land.
 - c) If we can **see the fallacy** of this kind of reasoning when it comes to God's forgiveness, we should be able to see **the same kind of fallacy** when it comes to our own forgiveness?
 - 2) If I don't consider all that the Bible teaches concerning **man's forgiveness** of others, I could draw **erroneous conclusions**
 - a) Based on some Bible passages alone, I could conclude that I should **forgive others** whether they **repent or not**
 - 1] Mk. 11:25: ²⁵ "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, **forgive him**, that your Father in heaven may also **forgive you** your trespasses.

- b) But that would be an **erroneous conclusion**, because another Bible passage clearly teaches that **my forgiveness is conditioned** on a **sinner's repentance**
 - 1] Lk. 17:3-4: ³ Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and **IF** he **repents**, **forgive** him. ⁴ And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, '**I repent**,' you shall **forgive** him."
- 3) Furthermore, we must **carefully interpret** Bible passages lest we draw **erroneous conclusions**
 - a) Mt. 6:12: ¹² And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.
 - 1] Does this mean someone must sin against me and I must forgive him before God will **forgive** me?
 - 2] Does this mean God will **not forgive** me unless someone has **sinned** against me, and I have **forgiven** him even if he refuses to **repent**?
- g. Third, it **does not harmonize** with what other NT passages teach
 - 1) Mt 5:23-24: ²³ Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has **something against you**, ²⁴ **leave** your gift there before the altar, and **go** your way. First **be reconciled** to your brother, and then **come** and **offer your gift**.
 - a) Why should this be **done** if the offended brother should and must **forgive** regardless of what the offender **does** or **doesn't do**?
 - b) Perhaps someone will argue that it's because the offended brother **refuses to forgive**
 - 1] The text **does not say** this
 - 2] One must **read** this conclusion **into** the text **not out of it**
 - 2) Mt. 18:15-17: ¹⁵ "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. ¹⁶ 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.' ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, **tell** it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, **let him be to you** like a heathen and a tax collector.
 - a) If I should **forgive** the brother who sins against me, even if he doesn't repent, just exactly **when** do I do that?
 - 1] Before I go to him the **first time**

- 2] Between the **first** and **second** visit
 - 3] Before I **tell** the church
 - 4] After he **refuses** to hear the church
 - 5] After I treat him like a **heathen** and a **tax collector**
- h. Fourth, forgiving an impenitent sinner for **ME** (my benefit) ignores my responsibility to **HIM**
- 1) If I **let bygones be bygones** and treat an impenitent sinner as if **nothing has happened**, will that **bring him to repentance**?
- G. Objection: “When Jesus said, “**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.**” (Lk. 23:34), doesn’t that indicate that **Jesus had forgiven them** without their repentance?”
- 1. It certainly indicates His **willingness** to forgive, but I don’t believe it indicates that He had **granted** forgiveness
 - a. First, He is not **granting** forgiveness, He is **asking** the Father to forgive
 - b. Second, if Jesus had **forgiven** them, why didn’t He **say so**, since He certainly did that on other occasions
 - 1) The **paralytic** (Mt. 9:2; Mk. 2:5; Lk. 5:20)
 - 2) The **sinful** woman (Lk. 7:47-48)
 - 3) **Zacchaeus** (Lk. 19:9)
 - 4) The **thief** on the cross (Lk. 23:43)
 - c. Third, this conclusion **flies in the face** of other biblical evidence that God forgives **conditionally** (Lev. 26:40-42; 2 Chr. 7:14; 30:9; Pr. 28:13; Isa. 55:6-7; Ezek. 18:21-23; 33:14-16; Acts 3:19; 1 Jn. 1:9)
 - 1) The Bible clearly teaches that the **prayer** that God will **answer** is a prayer that is offered according to **His will** (1 Jn. 5:14-15; Mt. 26:39-44; Jas. 4:13-15; cf. Psa. 37:4; Jn. 15:7)
 - 2) So if it is **God’s will** to **forgive** only those who **repent**, how should we interpret Jesus’ request?
 - a) If He was praying according to God’s will, then He would have been asking God to **forgive** His crucifiers upon their **repentance**
 - b) If He was asking God to **forgive** His crucifiers **without repentance**, would He have been **praying according to God’s will**?
 - c) *Note*: We could and should ask these **same questions** concerning

Stephen and Paul's requests (Acts 7:60; 2 Tim. 4:16)

- d. Fourth, if Jesus **forgave** His crucifiers, why did Peter tell the Jews on Pentecost who had crucified Jesus (Acts 2:23) to **repent and be baptized** for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38)
2. We must never forget that to **interpret Scripture correctly**:
 - a. We must use **all** of God's puzzle pieces
 - b. We must use **only** God's puzzle pieces
 - c. We must **fit** God's puzzle pieces together without **forcing** them in place
- H. Objection: "Jesus says we are to forgive a **"brother,"** in other words a fellow-Christian, if he repents; however, these instructions would not apply to a non-Christian"
1. On its face, this objection seems **wrong-headed** to me. It says in effect:
 - a. I **may not** forgive a **fellow Christian** (with whom I should have the greatest affinity) unless and until he **repents**
 - b. I **may** forgive a **non-Christian** (with whom I have little if any affinity) whether he **repents** or not
 - c. If anyone should **receive greater leniency**, it should be a **brother** in Christ; but this interpretation **gives greater leniency** to a **non-Christian**
 2. This objection ignores or overlooks the fact that the term **"brother"** means different things in different contexts
 - a. **"Brother"** (*adelphos*)
 - 1) *ESL*: "1 a brother, whether born of the same two parents or only of the same father or mother. 2 having the same national ancestor, belonging to the same people, or countryman. 3 any fellow or man. 4 a fellow believer, united to another by the bond of affection. 5 an associate in employment or office. 6 brethren in Christ. 6A his brothers by blood. 6B all men. 6C apostles. 6D Christians, as those who are exalted to the same heavenly place."
 - 2) *BDAG*: "1. a male from the same womb as the reference pers., **brother**, Mt 1:2, 11; 4:18, 21....The pl. can also mean *brothers and sisters*.... 2. a pers. viewed as a brother in terms of a close affinity, **brother, fellow member, member, associate** fig. ext. of 1. a. one who shares beliefs....Jesus calls everyone who is devoted to him *brother* Mt 12:50; Mk 3:35, esp. his disciples Mt 28:10; J 20:17. Hence gener. for those in such spiritual communion Mt 25:40; Hb 2:12 (Ps 21:23), 17 al....—Of the members of a relig. Community....Hence used by Christians in their relations w. each other Ro 8:29, 1 Cor 5:11; Eph

6:23; 1 Ti 6:2; Ac 6:3; 9:30; 10:23; Rv 1:9; 12:10.... b. a *compatriot....Ac 2:29; 3:17, 22* (Dt 18:15); **7:2, 23** (Ex 2:11), **25f** al.; **Ro 9:3.** c. without ref. to a common nationality or faith *neighbor* (of an intimate friend X., An. 7, 2, 25; 38. Specif. in the sense ‘neighbor’ Gen 9:5; Lev 19:17 al.) **Mt 5:22ff; 7:3ff; 18:15, 21, 35; Lk 6:41f; 17:3;** B 19:4; Hm 2:2 al.....” (18-19)

b. In the NT, the word “**brother**” is used to refer to:

- 1) A **male sibling** (Mt. 4:18)
- 2) A fellow **believer** (Rom. 8:29)
- 3) A fellow **Jew** (Acts 22:1)
- 4) A fellow **countrymen** (Acts 2:29)
- 5) A **neighbor** (Mt. 5:22) (#81, DBL:Greek)

I. Objection: “All the other NT passages about forgiveness place **no qualification** upon it (Mt. 6:12, 14-15; 18:21-22, 35; Mk. 11:25-26; Lk. 6:37; Lk. 11:4; 23:34; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13); shouldn’t we interpret Lk. 17:3-4 in light of these other passages?”

1. Jesus gives us **additional information** [another puzzle piece] (Lk. 17:3-4) that we must **properly apply** and not **explain away**
2. Illust.: Only Mt. 19:9 allows remarriage after **divorce for fornication**, none of the other MDR passages allow this. Should we **explain away** the clear meaning of Mt. 19:9 because this allowance is not mentioned anywhere else?
3. Passages that supply **fewer details** must be interpreted in light of passages that supply **more details**, not vice versa

J. Objection: “Some passages teach us to **forgive** if there is **no repentance** and one passage teaches that we are to **forgive** if there is **repentance**; therefore, we should **forgive either way**”

1. Should we use this same kind of reasoning when it comes to **conversion**?
 - a. Please consider the following statements from the book of Acts
 - 1) **Call** on the name of the Lord to be saved (Acts 2:21)
 - 2) **Believe** to be saved (Acts 16:31)
 - 3) **Repent** to be saved (Acts 3:19)
 - 4) **Be baptized** to be saved (Acts 22:16)
 - 5) **Repent and be baptized** to be saved (Acts 2:38)
 - b. Should we conclude **from these different passages that there are**

multiple ways to be saved, or should we conclude that there is **only one way to be saved** and these passages must be harmonized together?

K. So, how should we **harmonize** biblical teaching on forgiveness?

1. We cannot **ignore** or **disregard** anything that the Bible teaches about forgiveness, and everything that the Bible teaches must **harmonize**
2. One possible way to harmonize Bible teaching on forgiveness is to conclude that we should **only forgive** others when they **repent** and seek our forgiveness
 - a. That's what Jesus **clearly says** in Luke 17:3-4. So we accept what Jesus says and conclude that while several other passages **do not mention this condition**, they must take it for granted
 - b. Forgiveness is not just releasing **anger**, **bitterness**, and **malice** from my heart
 - 1) I'm **not to harbor those things** in my heart whether a sinner **repents or not** (Eph. 4:31-32; Col. 3: 12-13)
 - c. But there is more to forgiveness than just **releasing anger**
 - 1) Forgiveness is **pardon**
 - a) Num. 14:19: ¹⁹ **Pardon** the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have **forgiven** this people, from Egypt even until now.”
 - 2) Forgiveness is the **removal of guilt**.
 - a) Note: In the final analysis, **only God can forgive** a man of the guilt of sin
 - 1] Our forgiveness does not **remit sin**
 - 2] Our forgiveness **restores the offender** to our fellowship
 - a] One can be **forgiven** by **God** and not by his **fellowman**
 - b] One can be **forgiven** by his **fellowman** and not by **God**
 - b) Therefore, I can and must **consider** and **treat** someone as **guilty** if I believe he is unless and until he **repents** and **seeks my forgiveness**
 - 3) Forgiveness is **not remembering sin** against someone
 - a) Ezek. 33:14-16: ¹⁴ Again, when I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, ¹⁵ if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ¹⁶ None of his sins

which he has committed shall be **remembered against him**; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

- 4) Forgiveness is **considering** someone to be **righteous** and **treating** him as **righteous**
 - a) If someone **refuses to repent**, should I **consider** him to be righteous and **treat** him as righteous? **No!** In fact, I **cannot do that**
 - 1] Eph. 5:11: ¹¹ And **have no fellowship** with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.
 - b) If someone **refuses to repent**, I must treat him **right**
 - c) But only if he **repents** and **seeks forgiveness**, should I treat him as **righteous**

3. Another possible way to harmonize Bible teaching on forgiveness is to conclude that the Bible talks about **two different kinds of forgiveness**
 - a. NT passages use **different Greek words** for forgiveness
 - 1) In Lk. 17:3-4, Jesus uses the term *aphiemi*
 - a) *BDAG*: “2. to release from legal or moral obligation or consequence, *cancel, remit, pardon....*” (156)
 - 2) In Eph. 4:32, Paul uses the term *charizomai*
 - a) *BDAG*: “3. to show oneself gracious by forgiving wrongdoing, *forgive, pardon....*” (1078)
 - b. Note: The English word “**forgive**” can mean different things in different contexts
 - 1) *The American Heritage Dictionary*: “...tr. 1. To **excuse** for a fault or offense; to **pardon**. 2. To **renounce anger** or resentment against. 3. To **absolve** from payment of. --intr. To accord forgiveness....”
 - c. Perhaps these Greek words for forgiveness **mean something different**
 - 1) Perhaps *aphiemi* means **pardon**, release from debt, consider righteous
 - 2) Perhaps *charizomai* means **let go of anger**
 - a) That idea is in the **context** (Eph. 4:31)
 - d. Perhaps there are **two different kinds of forgiveness** being discussed
 - 1) One (*aphiemi*) is **conditioned** upon repentance
 - 2) The other (*charizomai*) is **not conditioned** upon repentance

- e. However, upon further reflection, I'm not sure this is the **best explanation**:
- 1) Since there are times that Jesus uses the term *aphiemi*, without mentioning any conditions (Mt. 6:12, 14-15; 18:21-22; Mk. 11:25-26; Lk. 11:4), we must conclude that:
 - a) *Aphiemi* is **conditioned on repentance** (Lk. 17:3-4) even though that condition is **not always mentioned**
 - b) *Aphiemi* **means different things** in different passages
 - 1] Sometimes *aphiemi* = *charizomai* (let go of anger), and sometimes it doesn't
 - 2) At times *aphiemi* and *charizomai* appear to be used interchangeably
 - a) *Aphiemi* (Lk. 7:47-49)
 - b) *Charizomai* (Lk. 7:43)
 - 3) Paul uses *charizomai* to talk about a "forgiveness" that is like **God's** and **Christ's** (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13), and their forgiveness is **conditional**
4. I tend to think that the **first explanation** is the simplest and the best

Conclusion:

- I. One of the most **challenging responsibilities** that we have is the obligation to **forgive one another....as God has forgiven us**
 - A. **Willingly**
 - B. **Unreservedly**
 - C. **Immediately**
 - D. **Completely**
 - E. **Permanently**
 - F. **Repeatedly**
 - G. **Conditionally**
- II. Forgiveness has been described as "**man's deepest need and highest achievement**"
 - A. If we want to go to heaven, we must **learn to forgive one another**
 - B. If we want to go to heaven, we must **be forgiven by God**
- III. And so it's time for me to ask you two questions:
 - A. Are you **forgiving**?

1. If you're **not a forgiving person**, you need to **repent** and **seek God's forgiveness**
- B. Are you **forgiven**?
 1. Are you **a Christian**? Have your sins been washed away by the blood of Christ?
 - a. If not, you need **God's forgiveness**
 - b. You can have it if you will:
 - 1) **Believe** that Jesus is the Christ
 - 2) **Repent** of your sins
 - 3) **Confess** Jesus as your Lord
 - 4) **Be baptized** in water for the remission of your sins
 2. Are you an **erring Christian**?
 - a. If you are, you also need **God's forgiveness**
 - b. You can have it if you will:
 - 1) **Repent** of your sins
 - 2) **Confess** them to God
 - 3) **Pray** for His forgiveness

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