

# Forgiveness

## An Antidote to Bitterness

As common as grass is found on the ground, so is unforgiveness found with bitterness. Said Jesus, our Lord:

“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” (Matthew 6:14-15 MKJV).

Another Bible version puts it this way: “In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can't get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others. If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God's part” (Matthew 6:14-15 MSG).

### Two to Forgive

There are, therefore, two to forgive - man and God, and both must be forgiven; they are inextricably joined in the process. If one is not forgiven, neither is the other. Not making things right with any person, we can forget about salving our conscience in praying to, or serving, God in some presumed fashion:

“But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be liable to the judgment. And whoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be liable to the Sanhedrin; but whoever shall say, Fool! Shall be liable to be thrown into the fire of hell. Therefore if you offer your gift on the altar, and there remember that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:22-24 MKJV).

Having forgiven God, would Job still harbor bitterness towards his friends?

In the teaching on [bitterness](#), we identified or defined bitterness as disagreement with God (wittingly or otherwise). Many have been bitter over certain circumstances, which they do not necessarily identify with, or attribute to, men, commonly called “acts of God” - a flood, hurricane, drought, death, war, lightning, fire, or pestilence. They may attribute these things to God and not man, they may attribute them to neither, or to both. However, being that God rules over all things, it does not take much logic to conclude that if God is in full control of all, then He is in some way

responsible for everything that happens. So the question on the minds of many victims is, “Why does He let this happen to me or us?”

Job became bitter towards God, primarily because he did not think he deserved his circumstances. And how could he know that he needed them? In the end, after a time of bitterly justifying himself and complaining, and God revealing His character and power somewhat to him, Job forgave God, confessing:

“Therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6 MKJV).

Now, having forgiven God, would he still hold a grudge toward Satan or harbor bitterness towards the Sabeans and Chaldeans, or his friends who condemned him without understanding? How could he, knowing that God was in charge? How could he not forgive man while forgiving God? That is exactly what happened after Job repented towards God:

“After the LORD had finished speaking to Job, He said to Eliphaz, ‘I am angry with you and your two friends, because you did not speak the truth about Me, the way My servant Job did. Now take seven bulls and seven rams to Job and offer them as a sacrifice for yourselves. Job will pray for you, and I will answer his prayer and not disgrace you the way you deserve. You did not speak the truth about Me as he did.’ Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar did what the LORD had told them to do, and the LORD answered Job's prayer. Then, after Job had prayed for his three friends, the LORD made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had had before” (Job 42:7-10 GNB)

To forgive man is to forgive God, because God is over all. To forgive God, then, is to forgive all men. That is what Jesus was talking about, saying:

“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.”

The door to receive forgiveness and mercy is to  
forgive and show mercy.

We have all been perpetrators (sinners), says God, against both man and especially against Him, the Creator of all men. How can we then rightly withhold forgiveness from any, being guilty of offences ourselves, offences often worse than those committed against us? Have we not all experienced forgiveness and mercy at one time or another, in some way or another?

Perhaps there are some who think they have not, because they have not recognized forgiveness and mercy for what they are. God is not bound to provide anything for us, as though we have merited it. Though all provision comes from Him, like rain or

sunshine or food, He owes us nothing; never did, and never will. One day, all will know that they are not only undeserving of any goodness, but that they deserve the worst.

What, then, must we do? The door to receive forgiveness and mercy is to forgive and to show mercy to others:

“Blessed are the merciful! For they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7 MKJV).

### What Conditions for Forgiveness?

Do we forgive only those who apologize or make things right? If we have to wait until someone apologizes or rectifies a wrong before we forgive, we may hold ourselves in bitterness a long time, perhaps a lifetime, in which case we will suffer and destroy much good. Many are those who go down to the grave in disease and bitterness of spirit, not willing to forgive. We can be our own greatest enemies. We throw away our peace and well-being, not realizing that, in doing so, our adversaries have gained a far greater victory over us than we had ever imagined.

Trusting God is perfect justice. Choosing our own way is injustice.

That is assuming they are enemies. So often we have surmised evil intent or deliberate wrongdoing when such was not at all the case. How many have later found they were mistaken, having treated a friend, work associate, neighbor, or family member spitefully, leaving her wondering what she did wrong, or wondering why the unjustified reaction to whatever was done? How much evil is wrought and good destroyed by bitterness and unforgiveness!

God knows right from wrong. Only He knows the motivation, the heart condition. Only He sees the whole picture. How can we expect justice if we are not willing to fairly consider all things pertaining to the matter in question? Trusting God to work it out is perfect justice. Choosing our own way is injustice. Justice breeds justice and injustice, injustice.

Do I or do I not deserve what I have suffered? I have found that I have suffered apparent injustices at the hands of others only because I have sown for them, though I did not at first realize I was responsible for my troubles because their onset was unrelated to the sins that I perpetrated and from which I was reaping. Sometimes it took me years to realize my fault. But God, Who is over all, knows what we deserve, and if we know anything about Him, we will know that He determines all things, both good and evil, in our lives perfectly. We may not like it, but that is not a primary concern to Him temporarily. He has a longer view in mind:

“For I am conscious of My thoughts about you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you hope at the end” (Jeremiah 29:11 BBE).

### What is Forgiveness?

What is forgiveness? Is it a mere statement, “I forgive you”? Is it, as is often heard, “I forgive, but I will never forget”? Is it a matter of forgiving and forgetting? It is none of these.

Forgiveness is an attitude. It is coming to a firm conclusion of attitude as though the offence did not happen. It is a matter of peace within, no matter what the offender thinks, says, or does.

Is it a matter of canceling all debt of the trespasser, tangible or intangible, even though the trespasser has shown no repentance, or even if he has? Not necessarily. While God forgave King David of Israel for his adultery and murder, David was still left with the consequences of his sins to come years later. There are sure repercussions (or rewards) for all that we think, say, and do.

What God counsels and expects of us is right attitude.

Is it a matter of acting as though the offence did not happen? No. Is it a matter of “business as usual”? No. Because Israel murmured against God, not trusting Him, saying they could not take the “land of milk and honey,” God disallowed them to take it. And though they soon changed their minds, God did not permit them to enter in. Because of their sin of unbelief, they were compelled to wander in the wilderness forty years, until the first generation died off.

There are always effects and implications of our actions. We cannot deny reality. An offense changes circumstances and introduces issues that must be faced and dealt with, whether the offender is genuinely repentant or not. There are those who have erroneously tried to act and think as though nothing has happened. That is to deny truth and reality. God has never expected anyone to do that; quite the contrary. What He does counsel and expect of us is a right attitude, one that will not eat away at others and ourselves. He wants us to have the victory within, regardless of any externals.

And that victory can be had; otherwise, He would not have promised it and expected it of us. Indeed, the victory must be had, or we perish. This world is full of offenses, and we have all had what we would consider to be our share and more. Many of these offenses will go on apparently unresolved in this life. We are not therefore bound to suffer continuously, because of external circumstances we cannot change. The turnaround begins within and is available by choice. It is therefore reasonable to believe and necessary to understand that unless we come to terms within about any

offense committed against us, we will not do well at all, certainly not as well as we could. Should we settle for less?

Forgiveness is coming to proper attitude with any matter we find undesirable.

Forgiveness does not suggest that it is God's will that we do nothing about offenses against us; sometimes it is; sometimes it is not. When Jesus advises to turn the other cheek, He is not saying that we should simply stand there and let our enemies rape our wives and slaughter our children, while we stand there with a morose, yet pious, expression on our faces, arms hung before us, one hand gently clasped over the other, as we and our loved ones suffer wrong. On the other hand, neither is retaliation or seeking revenge an option.

Forgiveness is coming to proper attitude in God's sight with any matter we find undesirable and for which we perceive certain persons responsible, whether we must act or not. Forgiveness is an attitude; Jesus was speaking of a right attitude, regardless of what we must do.

Does forgiveness prevent seeking justice? No. Neither is looking for opportunity to be compensated contrary to forgiveness. Forgiveness stands alone. We may seek compensation, sometimes rightfully so, but whether we seek it and receive it or not, we must forgive. It is the only way to victory and peace.

### **Forgiveness and Capital Punishment**

Seeing it quite related to the topic and being a contentious legal, social, and moral issue, let's touch on capital punishment. There are those who march around a prison at the time of a pending execution with placards saying, "Thou shalt not kill," not considering whether the "dead man walking" is guilty of his crimes or not, even knowing he is. These do-gooders think to be doing man and God justice. Having no understanding, they do not stop to consider that the same God Who said, "Thou shalt not kill," also had lawbreakers executed. Either He is in contradiction or they don't understand His will. I say the latter. If any think their country or government is behind the times with capital punishment for any crime, no matter how heinous, they must consider that God was behind the times so much more when prescribing, yes, commanding the death penalty for at least a dozen offences in Israel's former days. Death by stoning or burning was prescribed for murder, adultery, rape, blasphemy, idolatry, kidnapping, witchcraft, false witness (in certain cases), cursing parents, not keeping the Sabbath, treason, necromancy, homosexuality and other offences.

God's justice was not a matter of revenge but of discouraging evil.

Today our nations are decadent, yet thinking to be progressive. Sodom must have also judged herself to be progressive and liberalized, yet killing and raping. Ask yourself a simple question: Are we moving away from, or approaching, the social atmosphere Sodom and Gomorrah developed? Ask yourself another question: What was their end? Case closed.

Concerning forgiveness and mercy, Jesus was talking about attitude. There are those who seek revenge in execution, as if they can ever get any true satisfaction at the punishment, even death, of an offender, without resolving the matter within themselves. It won't happen. God's justice was not a matter of revenge but of discouraging and eliminating evil:

“And that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken to turn you away from Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of slaves, to thrust you out of the way in which Jehovah your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put the evil away from the midst of you. If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son, or your daughter, or the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is like your own soul, lures you secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods which you have not known, you nor your fathers, that is, of the gods of the people who are around you, near you or far off from you, from the one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth, you shall not consent to him nor listen to him. Nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare, nor shall you hide him. But you shall surely kill him. Your hand shall be first on him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And you shall stone him with stones so that he dies, because he has sought to drive you away from Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slaves. And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this among you” (Deuteronomy 13:5-11 MKJV).

We must forgive transgressors, even as we mete out justice to put away evil.

There are those who will deny that increased, appropriate punishment will have the desired preventative effect against crime. In their foolishness and self-serving agendas, they fail to see actions and reactions influenced and guided relative to the consequences enforced by the law or appropriate authorities. Dogs will not roam a certain yard if punished for doing so. Birds will not come to feeders so willingly, if ever, when seeing a cat preying nearby. I won't touch a hot stove again. Smokers find somewhere else to smoke for fear of fines. Criminals withdraw from their criminal activities for fear of serious penalties, while thumbing their noses at society, its laws

and judiciary when fines are “a slap on the wrist.” Won’t I buy my own lawn tractor instead of stealing my neighbor’s, if the penalty for stealing is ten years hard time? Either that, or I will let my grass grow. The notion that increased penalties do not deter crime is one that flies in the face of all logic, reason and reality; it is a very stupid notion indeed.

But we must forgive transgressors, even while we mete out justice to put away evil from our midst, preventing a cancerous social and moral rot that, unless decisively checked, would eventually destroy us all. It is about attitude, without the denial of reality.

## The Conclusion of the Matter - The Whole Counsel of God

How can we have a right attitude? Only by receiving the whole counsel of God, and not by separating out bits and pieces of it to suit our fanciful, selfish thoughts and ways. How can we receive the whole counsel of God? Only by the Way, the Truth, and the Life - Jesus Christ, Almighty God, Creator of Heaven and earth, the Righteous Judge of all men, Who is the Sole Source of our wisdom and right being.

Victor Hafichuk

### ***The Path of Truth:***

***A website of spiritual teaching and preaching, given by the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Come and be fed, according to His will.***

### **Prophecy to All Religious**

[Our Testimonies](#) | [What's New?](#) | [Notice Board](#) | [Teachings](#) | [Falsehood Exposed](#)

[False Teachers Exposed](#)

[The Issues of Life](#) | [Blog Wars](#) | [Proverbs](#) | [Poems](#) | [Music](#) | [Home](#)

[Statement of Doctrine](#) | [Site Map](#)

[How We Use the Scriptures](#) | [Copying & Linking](#) | [How One Is Saved](#)