

The Doctrine of Forgiveness

- 1) Definition and preliminary considerations:
 - a) The one who exercises forgiveness, pardons or excuses another party from the guilt of a sin, transgression, offence or wrongdoing.
 - b) Additionally, the one who has received pardon or forgiveness is released from punishment and is immune to any future reprisals or acts of retribution (i.e. revenge) for the transgression.
 - c) The willingness to forgive or pardon is dependent on the grace orientation of the offended party and not on any personal qualities of the transgressor.
 - d) All sin, by its very definition is committed against God (1 Kings 8:50, Psa. 51:4).
 - e) However it is a fact that people are offended, hurt or caused to stumble by others and, in a very real sense, the sin of the offending party is committed against individuals too (Gen. 20:9, Luke 17:4, cf. Prov. 18:19).
 - f) Our God stands ready to grant forgiveness to all (Exo. 34:6-7; Num. 14:18; Psa. 86:5; Neh. 9:17).
 - g) All believers are made alive with Christ by means of God's forgiveness (cf. Col. 2:13-14).
 - h) The exercise of faith in Christ results in forgiveness by God (Acts 10:43).
 - i) The issue of forgiveness is an issue of paramount importance in the ph. 2 of a believer.
 - j) After the SAJG, the confession of personal sin to God eventuates in forgiveness for the believer (**1 John 1:9** "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.").
 - k) In relation to our interaction with others, we are commanded to forgive everyone regardless of the offense (**Colossians 3:13** "...bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.").
- 2) Vocabulary:
 - a) טָהַר (*taher*): v. to cleanse or purify. The idea is to cleanse or be cleansed from the guilt of sin (98x- Lev. 16:30).
 - b) כָּפַר (*kaphar*): v. to cover, pacify; to atone by offering a substitute. The term is often used in reference to the removal of sin or defilement (121x-Lev. 4:20, 19:22, cf. Psa. 78:38)
 - c) כָּסָה (*kasah*): v. to cover, hide, conceal. Sins are depicted as being covered or put out of sight by God and therefore no longer an issue in the believer's ph. 2 (152x- Psa 32:1).
 - d) מָחָה (*machah*): v. to wipe, wipeout. Similar to כָּסָה (*kasah*). The term communicates the idea of God wiping away a believer's sin thereby forgiving him (36x- Neh. 4:5).
 - e) נָשָׂא or נָסָה (*nasa or nasah*): v. to lift, carry, take. In certain contexts, the verb is translated as "forgive." It figuratively depicts the taking away of an individual's sin or the taking away of guilt. Also, it is used to refer to the exercise of forgiveness on the part of both man and God (656x- Gen 50:17, Josh. 24:19).
 - f) סָלַח (*salach*): v. to forgive, pardon. Used in Scripture solely of God and His offer of pardon and forgiveness to the sinner. The term doesn't refer to individuals forgiving each other (46x- Num. 15:28, Psa. 103:3).

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- g) סְלִיחָה (*selichah*): n. forgiveness (3x- Psa. 130:4).
 - h) סָלַח (*sallach*): adj. ready to forgive, forgiving (1x- Psa. 86:5).
 - i) ἀπολύω (*apoluo*): v. a legal term to grant acquittal, set free, release, pardon (66x- Lk. 6:37).
 - j) ἀφίημι (*aphiemi*): v. to release from legal or moral obligation or consequence, cancel, remit, pardon, forgive (143x- Lk 5:20, 1 John 1:9).
 - k) ἄφεσις (*aphesis*): n. the act of freeing from an obligation, guilt, or punishment, pardon, cancellation, forgiveness (i.e. cancellation of the guilt of sin; 17x- Lk. 1:77, Acts 10:43).
 - l) ἐπικαλύπτω (*epikalupto*): v. to cover over or up; to hide from view by covering. This verb is used only once in the New Testament to translate Psalm 32:1 where David asks God to “cover up” his sin (1x- Rom. 4:7, cf. קָסַח *kasah* above).
 - m) καλύπτω (*kalupto*): v. to cover. In certain passages the term refers to the covering of sin (8x- James 5:20, 1 Peter 4:8).
 - n) χαρίζομαι (*charizomai*): v. to show oneself gracious by forgiving wrongdoing, forgive, pardon. The root is χάρις (*charis*), “grace or kindness” (23x- 2 Cor. 2:7, Col. 3:13).
- 3) The forgiveness of mankind by God.
- a) Forgiveness and salvation.
 - i) The inherent penalty of sin is spiritual, physical, and eternal death (Gen. 2:17, Rom. 5:12-14, 6:23).
 - ii) If mankind was to be saved, he must first be released from the penalty of sin.
 - iii) In addition to the penalty of sin, mankind is viewed in disfavor by God (John 3:36, Rom. 1:18, 5:9, Eph. 2:3).
 - iv) The penalty was graciously removed through Christ’s perfect sacrifice on the cross where He bore the punishment for ALL mankind’s sin in His body (Isa. 53:5-12, 1 Pet. 2:24).
 - v) Subsequent Christ’s perfect work, the penalty of sin was removed and forgiveness was made possible (Acts 13:38-39, Rom. 8:1, 33-34).
 - vi) Christ knew this was His role during the incarnation (Matt. 20:28, 26:28).
 - vii) His perfect sacrifice provides the basis for the forgiveness of mankind by God (Rom. 4:7, Col. 2:13-14, cf. John 1:29).
 - viii) The pardon or forgiveness of man’s sin is the legal act of God whereby He removes the charges that were held against mankind.
 - ix) Although mankind has been forgiven by God, an individual doesn’t secure His forgiveness until he changes his thinking and believes in Jesus Christ as Savior (Luke 3:3; 24:46-47; Acts 2:38; 26:18).
 - x) At the point of saving faith, the individual is “officially” forgiven by God and is exonerated from the guilt of sin (Mark 2:5; Luke 7:48-50).
 - xi) The believer is justified or declared righteous by God (i.e. imputation of +R) thereby enabling him to have fellowship with God (2 Cor. 5:21).
 - xii) No longer viewed in disfavor, the justified person is viewed as a friend of God (2 Chron. 20:7, James 2:23, cf. Gal. 3:26).
 - xiii) Forgiveness results in a restoration to fellowship due to the cleansing which takes place when the believer is forgiven (cf. James 4:8).

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- b) Forgiveness after salvation (ph. 2 forgiveness).
 - i) After the SAJG, a believer is in need of forgiveness due to personal sin.
 - ii) Personal sin causes the believer to be in an impure state in need of cleansing or forgiveness (cf. Lev. 16:16).
 - (1) The O.T. believer followed a protocol for cleansing which included:
 - (a) Personal confession to God (Psa. 32:5, 38:18, Prov. 28:13, cf. Psa. 51:2, 7, Jer. 33:8).
 - (b) Sin offerings (Lev. 4:27-35, 5:5-10).
 - (c) National confession and cleansing (Lev. 26:40, Dan. 9:4-20, cf. Ezek. 36:25, 33; 37:23).
 - (2) The CA believer is forgiven when he confesses his personal sin to God. At the point of confession, the believer in effect is cleansed from all unrighteousness (i.e. rebound, **1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.).
 - (3) Upon following the appropriate protocol, both the O.T. and CA believer are forgiven and restored to fellowship with God.
 - iii) Post salvation forgiveness is based on the fact that Christ was judged for every sin. Additionally, God is completely faithful and just to forgive every time a believer confesses personal sin(s) (cf. **1 John 1:7** but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.).
- 4) Believers are enjoined to forgive others.
 - a) All believers are commanded to forgive others (Mark 11:25).
 - b) Especially each other in the royal family (Col. 3:13).
 - c) Furthermore, forgiveness is to be extended to the offending party every time an offense is committed against the believer regardless of the severity (cf. Luke 17:4).
 - d) In the post-salvation niche, receiving forgiveness from God is dependant on a believer's willingness to forgive others.
 - i) Believers are forgiven all sins because of Christ's work on the cross (Eph. 1:7, Col. 2:13-14, 1 John 2:12, cf. Psa. 32:1).
 - ii) Therefore, as we received pardon, we are to forgive the one, anyone, who might give us cause for complaint (2 Cor. 2:7, Eph. 4:32).
 - iii) If the believer fails to forgive the offense of others, he will not be forgiven his sin (Matt. 6:14-15; 18:21-22, Luke 11:4).
 - iv) Failure to forgive is often manifested in anger, bitterness, grudges, a malicious attitude, a lack of care or concern for another, acts of retaliation or revenge, etc.
 - v) Apart from the sin of unbelief, there is no sin the Father will not forgive.
 - vi) Who are we as believers to refuse to forgive when God graciously forgives us of our sin...every sin?
 - vii) The believer who fails to forgive will not be restored to fellowship! In other words, rebound is ineffectual.
 - viii) This is an incredibly dire scenario for the believer that hopes to grow spiritually in the Angelic conflict.

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- ix) Various ramifications for the believer who is out of fellowship:
 - (1) He is under the domination of the OSN (Rom. 8:7).
 - (2) Inability to correctly understand Divine viewpoint which results in instability and insecurity in the life of the believer (1 Cor. 2:14, cf. Eph. 4:14).
 - (3) Forfeiture of the opportunity for SG3 and the wreath (Rev. 2:10).
 - (4) Unable to manifest “love” (ἀγάπη- AGAPE) towards other members of the royal family (Gal. 5:22, cf. Gal. 5:13, Eph. 4:2).
 - (5) The expectation of DD (cf. Lk. 6:38-39).
 - (6) The believer who declines to forgive another may be exploited by Satan (2 Cor. 2:11).
- e) Additionally, believers who refuse to forgive are often the cause of dissensions and strife in the local church.
 - i) Again, the believer who refuses to forgive is out of fellowship and therefore is being influenced by his OSN.
 - ii) Rarely will this believer keep his mouth shut. Instead, he often “feels” compelled to verbalize his side of the complaint to other members of the local body.
 - iii) Commonly, “his side” of the complaint consists of a litany of complaints against the believer(s) who offended him.
 - iv) Do not give such a one an audience! Admonish him to forgive as it is in his best spiritual interests (cf. Eph. 4:31, Col. 3:8, 1 Peter 2:1).
 - v) Believers are not to be verbally combative or disputatious (Gal. 5:26, Phil. 2:14).
 - **Gal. 5:26-** “challenging one another” (προκαλέω- PROKALEO, “to provoke or challenge in a hostile sense; to call out to fight- LS)
 - **Phil 2:14-** “disputing” (διαλογισμός- DIALOGISMOS, “a verbal exchange that takes place when conflicting ideas are expressed, to dispute, argue)- perhaps due to different sides of a complaint.
 - vi) His complaint may be absolutely valid! However, his failure to forgive and subsequent verbal sinning are reprehensible (cf. Gal. 5:15, James 5:9).
 - vii) Such a one is divisive and doesn’t contribute to the unity of the local church (cf. 1 Cor 12:25).
 - viii) Pay careful attention to and separate from believers who are divisive (cf. Rom 16:17).
- 5) Conflict resolution and forgiveness.
 - a) Personal conflicts are very common among believers (e.g. Paul vs. Barnabas, Acts 15:36-39, Col. 4:10, 2 Tim. 4:11).
 - b) The believer is expected to resolve conflicts according to the principles of sound doctrine and not allow complaints to fester (cf. Hebrews 12:15).
 - c) If the offending party is unwilling to come to terms with what they have done, to apologize, to admit that what they did was wrong, to forgive you, etc., the believer does NOT have the freedom to withhold forgiveness.
 - d) Rather, believers are commanded to forgive others even if there is no formal apology (e.g. “I’m sorry” or “I apologize”) or recognition of the offense.

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- e) Did Christ wait for a formal apology from the Romans before He forgave them?
No (cf. Lk. 23:34ff).
- f) In the case of ongoing offenses among believers in the local church, the offended believer should attempt to personally address the one who committed the offense against him.
 - i) Again, forgiveness must be extended regardless of the severity of the offense.
 - ii) At this point, the offended believer must determine whether or not it would be profitable to proceed. In certain scenarios, it may be more beneficial to let God alone deal with the offending party (cf. Psa. 35:1ff, 1 Cor. 6:7).
 - iii) A believer must recognize that he will experience a certain amount of undeserved suffering in his ph. 2 (cf. Gen. 26:20-22, 1 Peter 4:19).
 - iv) Do not be frivolous or petty in initiating this process.
 - v) It is not an outlet for revenge or to settle a personal vendetta. Carefully examine your motives (cf. Deut. 32:5, Prov. 20:22).
 - vi) Pray for guidance in determining the right opportunity to address the offending party.
 - vii) This initial attempt at reconciliation is to be done in private (Matt. 18:15, lit: "...between you and him alone...", cf. Lev. 19:17).
 - viii) In addition, this tends to alleviate quarrels, disputes, slander, etc. spreading to other "uninvolved" members in the body. Do not allow other believers to meddle in the situation (cf. Prov. 26:17, 1 Tim 5:13).
 - ix) The private discussion allows the offending believer an opportunity to correct his thinking and behavior.
 - x) An exhortation in private may be just the catalyst needed to wake up the offending believer.
 - xi) Remember, God gives you ample time to correct your OSN activities so you too allow time for another believer to make corrections.
 - xii) If he listens and makes the appropriate adjustments in accordance with Divine viewpoint, then the conflict is resolved.
- g) If the offending believer refuses to cease his OSN activity after the private exhortation, then the attempt to resolve the issue enters another phase.
 - i) Now the offending party forfeits privacy regarding the ongoing OSN activity.
 - ii) The offended believer should continue to pray for wisdom and give careful consideration to the offenses.
 - iii) He must then enlist the aid of one or two witnesses to confirm the facts regarding the situation and confront the errant believer again (Matt. 18:16, cf. Deut. 19:15, 1 Tim. 5:19).
 - iv) The goal is to get the believer to correct his thinking and conduct.
- h) If the errant believer refuses to change his actions after the second confrontation, then the process of resolution escalates even further.
 - i) At this point, the matter is brought before the church leadership (i.e. P-T and deacons, Matt. 18:17).
 - ii) Clearly this is not a forum for trifling matters.
 - iii) An investigation will ensue and binding decision will be rendered according to the facts (Matt. 18:18).

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- iv) The errant believer is given another opportunity to change his OSN thinking and behavior.
- v) It may involve a public reprimand (1 Tim. 5:20).
- i) If he refuses to listen to the leadership of the church, then the local body is to remain aloof from him and in certain severe cases he is to be removed from the assembly (**Matthew 18:17** "And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer.", **2 Thessalonians 3:14** "And if anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that man and do not associate with him, so that he may be put to shame. ¹⁵ And yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother", cf. 1 Cor. 5:1, 11).
 - i) Forgiveness must be applied but fellowship must cease until the errant believer amends his conduct.
 - ii) Furthermore, members of the local church are not to abuse or persecute this believer. Remember to be humble as you too may be vulnerable to temptation (cf. Gal. 6:1).
 - iii) He is not an enemy. Rather, he is a fellow member of the royal family with equal rights and status by virtue of his union with Christ.
 - iv) However, his manner of life is not in compliance with Divine standards (cf. Jer. 7:23, **Colossians 1:10** "...so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God...").
 - v) Ideally the errant believer will make a recovery (cf. James 5:15).
 - vi) Some believers persist in their defiance of God and never change their conduct. Severe DD is in store for them (Heb. 6:4-8).
- 6) Conclusions concerning forgiveness.
 - a) Due to the perfect sacrifice of Christ and the exercise of saving faith, believers are exonerated from the guilt of all sin.
 - b) After the SAJG, the believer is cleansed from sin via the confession of personal sin to God the Father.
 - c) Believers are instructed to be ready and willing to forgive anyone who sins against them (**Mark 11:25** "...And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone...").
 - d) We are to be especially ready to forgive fellow members of the royal family.
 - e) Regardless of the gravity of the offense or the number of occurrences.
 - f) Lack of forgiveness on the part of believer will bring his spiritual growth to a standstill (**Matthew 6:14-15** "For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ "But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."
 - g) Due to the perfect sacrifice of Christ and the exercise of saving faith, believers are exonerated from the guilt of all sin.
 - h) After the SAJG, the believer is cleansed from sin via the confession of personal sin to God the Father (**Psalm 32:5** I acknowledged my sin to Thee, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"; And Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin. Selah.", **Psalm 51:2** "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.").

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- i) It may be hard to forgive at times, but take comfort in knowing that as you forgive you are in obedience to God.
- j) Additionally, you are doing your part in trying to be at peace with all men (**Romans 12:18** “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.”).
- k) The believer who readily forgives the offenses of others will reap blessings in time and eternity.

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