

Forgiven Too Much to Not Forgive

Matthew 18:21-35

April 14, 2024

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Extending forgiveness to others who have wronged us is required by God.

I. Jesus says that our forgiveness should be without limit.

Jesus said to his disciples: “Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come. It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck than to cause one of these little ones to stumble. So watch yourselves.

“If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying ‘I repent,’ you must forgive them.” (Luke 17:1-4)

II. To understand Jesus’ parables, one must correctly identify who and what the characters and things represent:

A. The King represents God.

B. The servant represents any person.

C. One talent (bag of gold) was equal to 20 years of income.

D. Ten thousand talents represents 200 lifetimes of earnings (50 years each).

E. The bags of gold (talents) represents our sin debt owed to God.

F. The only way such a massive debt could be cancelled is by being forgiven. (by the grace of God)

G. One silver coin (*denarii*) equaled one day’s wage.

H. The fellow servant represents someone who had sinned against or offended the first.

III. Our forgiveness cost God infinitely more than anything we might, for whatever reason, find ourselves having to forgive in others.

IV. Seven critical reasons we must extend forgiveness to others:

A. We are commanded to do so.

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:1-6)

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us... We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister. (1 John 4:7-12, 19-21)

B. Unforgiving anger gives the devil power.

That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. (Ephesians 4:20-27)

C. Our Christian testimony is compromised.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35)

A man's wisdom gives him patience;
it is to his glory to overlook an offense. (Proverbs 19:11)

Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools. (Ecclesiastes 7:9)

D. God may discipline believers for failing to forgive.

As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Whoever heard of a child who was never disciplined? If God doesn't discipline you as He does all of His children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really His child after all. Since we respect our earthly fathers who disciplined us, should we not all the more cheerfully submit to the discipline of our heavenly Father and live forever? For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always right and good for us because it means we will share in his holiness. No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it is painful! But afterward there will be a quiet harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way. (Hebrews 12:7-11)

Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. (Revelation 3:19)

E. Unwillingness to forgive may indicate one is not truly saved.

And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors. (Matthew 6:12)

For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matthew 6:14-15)

“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.” (Mark 11:25-26)

The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister. (1 John 3:8-10)

That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world. (1 Corinthians 11:30-32)

F. God's discipline may fall on the whole church.

“The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the LORD...keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it.” (Joshua 6:17-18)

"But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things, Achan ... took some of them. So the Lord's anger burned against Israel. (Joshua 7:1)

G. God promises blessings for those who obey.

Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. (2 Corinthians 13:11)

V. Seven principles for maintaining good relationships:

1. We must choose the way of peace.

2. We must not harden our hearts.

Blessed is the one who always trembles before God, but whoever hardens their heart falls into trouble. (Proverbs 28:14)

3. We must not harbor and nurture our grievances.

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord... Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud...Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:9-11, 16a, 17-18 19, 21)

4. We must not imagine and ascribe motivations.

A person may think their own ways are right,
but the LORD weighs the heart. (Proverbs 21:2)

The heart is deceitful above all things
and beyond cure.

Who can understand it?

"I the LORD search the heart
and examine the mind,

to reward each person according to their conduct,
according to what their deeds deserve." (Jeremiah 17:9-10)

5. We must accept our share of the blame – and more.

The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? (1 Corinthians 6:7)

6. We must not attempt to justify our own actions.

7. We must humble ourselves in order to seek reconciliation.

Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:19, 21)

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor? (James 4:10-12)