

WHAT JESUS SAID – THEN AND NOW

MYTHS ABOUT FORGIVENESS

INTRODUCTION: To be both frank and honest, a complete study of what Jesus said reveals some things that the Master spoke which are difficult to swallow. It is not that these things are difficult to understand. In fact, sometimes it is the clarity of the words that make the message hard to bear. Such are the words of Jesus we will examine today, drawn from three of the four gospels, where Jesus talked about forgiveness.

Matthew 6:14-15 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.

Mark 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."

Luke 6:37 "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

To forgive means to release a person from a debt they owe to you.

- **Jesus paid the debt owed by us to God the Father by dying on the cross.**
- **When someone sins against us by word or action, we consider that they owe us.**
 - **An apology**
 - **An explanation**
 - **Some act of atonement to “make up” for what they did**
 - **A promise to not do it again**
 - **Maybe more**
- **When we trusted Christ, God forgave all our sin.** He did not demand an apology, an explanation, or a promise. He did not give us a list of things we had to do to get that sin mark off our record. Because of Christ, God the Father forgave us. He released our debt.
- **Now Jesus says, because God released your debt, release the debt others owe you because they have hurt and offended you.**

But folks, in spite of these clear words of Jesus, unforgiveness is a common sin among Christians. A tradition of myths and lies about forgiveness have formed and are often circulated in the church that contradicts the Biblical truth and the clear message of our Lord.

I want to ask you join me in examining some of those myths this morning.

I. MYTH: SOME PEOPLE DO NOT DESERVE MY FORGIVENESS.

Forgiveness is based on God's forgiveness of us, not on the offender's worthiness.

Colossians 3:13 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*.

A. Just as Christ is willing to forgive anyone, we also must be willing to forgive anyone.

**B. We are to forgive, because we are forgiven,
not because the offender deserves forgiveness.**

II. MYTH: I CANNOT FORGIVE BECAUSE I HAVE NOT BEEN ASKED FOR FORGIVENESS.

Forgiveness is not conditioned on our being asked.

A. People often excuse their failure to forgive by saying, "but he did not ask for forgiveness."

B. Look again at what Jesus said.

Matthew 6:14-15 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.

Mark 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."

Luke 6:37 "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

Also look at what the Holy Spirit gave to Paul to write to the church at Colossae.

Colossians 3:13 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.

Where does it say, "Forgive if someone asks you to forgive them?"

It does not!

The Scripture instructs the believer to forgive someone who sins against us as Christ has forgiven us. We are to forgive without condition.

III. MYTH: I CANNOT FORGIVE IF I CANNOT FORGET.

A. This is not a Biblical principle.

1. Perhaps it comes from God's promise that He will remember our sin no more. (Heb. 8:12)
2. **Even with God, this does not mean that God has forgotten our sins in the sense that He does not have the capacity to recall them if He desired.** But it means that He does

not choose to recall them because the consequence owed is forgiven. He has no reason and no desire to recall them.

- B. We are commanded to forgive, not to forget.**
- C. Forgiveness means that we do not recall it to their harm.**
- D. If we recall it, even inadvertently, or someone recalls it to us, we remember that we have forgiven.**

IV. MYTH: I JUST CANNOT FORGIVE.

- A. God never gives a command that He does not give His children the power to keep.**
- B. For the murderer to say, "I could not help it" is a lie.**
- C. For the thief to say, "I could not help it" is a lie.**
- D. For a person to say, "I cannot forgive" is also a lie.**

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

If Christ could forgive those who rejected Him as their Savior and said, "Father, forgive them" even while He was hanging on the cross, then He can forgive others through you.

V. MYTH: FORGIVENESS MEANS RESTORATION OF THE OFFENDER'S FORMER POSITION. IF I CANNOT RESTORE, I CANNOT FORGIVE.

No, that is not what forgiveness means.

Forgiveness is free;

trust is earned.

- A. Forgiveness is different than trust.**
 - 1. Forgiveness means a release of the debt.** When I forgive you, you do not owe me anything because of what you did.
 - a. not an apology
 - b. not an explanation
 - c. not a reformation
 - d. not a promise concerning future action
 - 2. Trust means that I have confidence in you and in what you will do.**
 - a. **Trust is earned over time.** As people are faithful, our confidence in them increases. Therefore our trust increases.
 - b. **When an offence occurs, trust may also be destroyed** as a result of the offence.
 - c. **Forgiveness must always be granted to the offender, but trust can only be restored by faithful action of the offender.**

- d. For instance, what if Waldo is taking care of the money and financial records for a concession stand, and we discover that Waldo is stealing some of the money and covering it up by altering the books?
- (1) We must forgive Waldo, because Christ has forgiven us.
 - (2) We do not have to restore Waldo to being the manager of the concession stand.
 - (3) In fact, we should not. That would not be wise on our part.
 - (4) We may give Waldo another job, and observe his faithfulness and the fruit of repentance in his life.
 - (5) At a later time, if our confidence has been reestablished so that we trust Waldo and are confident he will not steal or lie again, then we can restore him to the position of trust.
 - (6) If Waldo's actions do not reestablish that trust, we have not wronged him or been unchristian in our actions.
 - (7) We owe a sinning person forgiveness, but trust is earned by what they do.**
 - (8) Even Jesus did not trust everyone.

John 2:24 But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all *men*,

John 13:11 For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean."

VI. MYTH: I JUST NEED TO FORGIVE MYSELF.

- A. This thought also has no Biblical basis. **The Bible never says anything about forgiving yourself.** It speaks much about forgiveness but only about
1. God forgiving us
 2. Our forgiving others
 3. But never about us forgiving ourselves
- B. We do not need to forgive ourselves because we have not sinned against ourselves.
1. **We have sinned against God.**
 2. **We have sinned against others.**
 3. **We have sinned because of self, to please self, to gratify self, because of self will, but never against self. We cannot owe ourselves.**
 4. This is actually a subtle way for the evil one to focus our attention on doing something for ourselves when our attention should be focused on confessing to God or seeking forgiveness of others whom we have offended.

VII. MYTH: I NEED TO FORGIVE GOD.

- A. This statement is blasphemy.
- B. God does not sin.

C. James 1:13 says that God is not even tempted by sin.

James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

D. To say that you need to forgive God is to say that God sinned against you, and that is a blasphemous accusation.

E. **If you are offended, hurt, or angry because of something God did or allowed, you need to reorient your thinking to understand that in all things, God's ultimate purpose is to bring you into a right and wonderful relationship with Him**

in which you will find the greatest eternal happiness and success.

But you must cease to falsely accuse and blame Him and

Instead turn to Him in faith and trust.

The Lord Jesus loves you and gave His life for you.

CONCLUSION: This morning we have the blessed privilege of celebrating the Lord's Supper. Remembering His body broken for us and His blood shed for us provides a perfect occasion for us to consider again the great price that Jesus paid for us to be forgiven.

CELEBRATION OF THE SUPPER

Partaking of the elements of the supper gives us an opportunity to remember that our granting forgiveness to someone else who sinned against us will never cost us what our forgiveness cost Christ.

- We will not have to be beaten until our body is broken and ravaged.
- We will not have to be nailed to a cross.
- We will not have to hang there for hours while our blood drains upon the ground.
- We will not have to be estranged from God in order to forgive somebody who has sinned against us, even if their sin is very grievous and hurt us very deeply.
- The death of Jesus paid the penalty for sin once for all, for mine and for theirs.
- I do not need to try to extract more penalty for their sin any more than I try to pay the price for my own.

Now, take the bread and hold it up. Say these words with me.

Lord, because of Your body

Broken for me,

I am forgiven.

Now, take the cup and hold it up. Say these words with me.

Lord, because of Your blood

Shed for me,

I am forgiven.

Now, if you are willing to forgive any and all who have sinned against you, speak these words with me.

**Lord, because of Your body
Broken for me,**

**Because of Your blood
Shed for me,**

I forgive those who have sinned against me.