

Forgiveness

I. Introduction

A. Background

- A recent statistic indicates that there is one lawyer for every 44 Americans.
- There are more students in law school training to be lawyers than any other profession.
- There are more lawyers than doctors.
- Some of the top-rated movies include Rambo I, II, and III and a host of other “get them back” movies with the same basic plots.
- Psychologists tell us that one of the number one problems that people have is guilt. A close second is bitterness and anger over some hurt received in the past.
- The basis of many therapies is “pass the buck.” In these therapies we are told to find the person responsible for our problems, which incidentally is never us, and blame them. It is vogue to blame ones parents for all the ills that they have when in fact it is their own problem.
- With the skyrocketing divorce rate in the church as well as society there comes a host of problems which include bitterness, anger, depression, guilt, and many other associated ills.
- We live in a society that is anti-forgiveness. We tend to look on those that forgive as being weak. Instead of considering others, we desire to assert our rights and not take any guff from anyone.

God Himself claims to be a God of forgiveness - Exodus 34:6ff.

Exodus 34:6-7 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

Of all of the qualities of God that when emulated by man makes man most like God is that of forgiveness.

Proverbs 19:11 The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.

It is of utmost importance that we learn to be forgiving people. Without this characteristic, it is impossible to experience community life. We become like porcupines on a cold, winter night.

B. Examples

We are told by our lawyer that we should not allow our spouse to get away with what he did to us. Sue him, take the house, car, and everything you can get. After all, he did you wrong and you have a right to sue!

Someone says something against us at work. Instead of blowing it off, we let it fester. Finally when they screw up we make sure the boss knows.

Our neighbor is constantly giving us a hard time about our pets. When we find out that their favorite cat was hit by a car we inwardly rejoice.

We are in a hurry to get to church. Suddenly someone pulls out in front of us then goes 20 miles below the speed limit. We get mad and make an obscene gesture at the pastor, who happens to be in the car that pulled in front of us.

Our friend says something inadvertently that hurts us. Instead of forgetting about it, we allow it to fester and grow until our friendship is strained to the breaking point.

C. Why study forgiveness?

1. We need to forgive in order to release ourselves from the bondage of the past.
2. We need to forgive in order to make ourselves useable to God.
3. We need to forgive because of the commandment of God.
4. We need to forgive because it is our nature as believers to forgive.
5. We need to forgive because we are most like God when we forgive others.
6. We need to forgive in order to experience the blessing of God.
7. We need to forgive in order to experience the forgiveness of God ourselves.

II. The Forgiveness of God

A. The Basis of God's Forgiveness

1. There is no forgiveness of sins apart from the substitutionary, sacrificial death of Christ. Ultimately, all forgiveness is based in this historical event.

Romans 3:21-28 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

- a. The **Justice** of God demands it.

God is just, and since He is just He cannot allow sin to go unpunished. According to Romans 3:21-28 one of the main reasons Christ died was to exonerate God's forgiveness of past sins. Some

would say that God just ignored the sins committed in the Old Testament. He did not. He put them “on account” and cancelled the debt when Christ paid the penalty for sin at the cross.

Hebrews 10:11-12 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

- b. The **Holiness** of God demands it.

God is holy, which means that He is totally separate from anything that defiles. As a result, it is not possible for sinful man to stand in the presence of Holy God without subjecting himself to God’s wrath. Because of the shed blood of Christ, we are made holy, and because of that we can stand in God’s presence.

Colossians 1:21-22 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconcile In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight:

Hebrews 12:14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

Romans 5:9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

- c. The **Mercy** of God demands it.

God’s mercy, that is, His pity on our miserable condition, caused God to send Christ to pay the penalty for our sins.

Ephesians 2:4-5 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

- d. The **Grace** of God demands it.

Salvation is founded in God’s grace. It is because of His unmerited favor towards us that we receive the forgiveness of our sins by faith.

Romans 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Romans 5:15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

2. Forgiveness is based in the blood of Christ, which is a picture of His death.

Ephesians 1:7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

1 Peter 1:18-19 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Romans 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

Romans 5:9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

Colossians 1:20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

Hebrews 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

3. False Theories of the Atonement

a. Ransom Theory - derived from Mark 10

This theory believes that Christ had to die to “pay off” Satan and release men from his slavery. There is no Biblical support for this. Christ died to satisfy the justice, holiness, mercy, and grace of God.

b. Moral Influence Theory

This theory believes that Christ died to give us a moral lesson in forgiveness. The problem is that this viewpoint denies the substitutionary death of Christ. It is most often associated with liberalism.

c. Substitutionary Theory

Christ died in our place, taking our punishment on Himself. This is the Biblical and orthodox view.

1 Peter 2:24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

B. The Need for Forgiveness.

1. Man is guilty.

Zechariah 3:1-10 And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments.

And the angel of the LORD stood by. And the angel of the LORD protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by. Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree.

Romans 3:10-18 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Ecclesiastes 7:20 For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

2. Sin demands death.

a. Physical

Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Ezekiel 18:4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Romans 5:12-18 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

b. Spiritual

Ephesians 2:1-2 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: Wherein in time past ye walked according to the

course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

c. Eternal

Revelation 20:11-15 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

3. Heaven is closed to the sinner

Revelation 21:8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Revelation 21:27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

C. The Prerequisite for God's Forgiveness.

1. Repentance

Isaiah 1:10-18 Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 3:19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

Acts 17:30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

2. Humility

Matthew 5:3-5 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Psalms 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

2 Chronicles 34:14-28 And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of the LORD given by Moses. And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan. And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do it. And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen. Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying, Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book. And Hilkiah, and they that the king had appointed, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college:) and they spake to her to that effect. And she answered them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah: Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched. And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard; Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the LORD. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again.

Isaiah 57:15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

3. Confession

Nehemiah 9:2-3 And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God.

Psalms 32:5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

Proverbs 28:13 He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

Romans 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

III. God's Forgiveness Pictured

A. The Prodigal Son - Luke 15:11ff.

1. Forgiveness is seen here as:
 - a. Eager
 - b. Doesn't even wait for the sinner to repent.
 - c. Rejoices in reconciliation.
 - d. Total
2. The warnings in this story are:
 - a. Such forgiveness is unappreciated.
 - b. Such forgiveness is misunderstood.
 - c. Such forgiveness is seen as undeserved by others.

B. Christ on the cross.

Luke 23:34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

1. The repentant thief

Luke 23:40-43 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

2. The Centurion

Luke 23:47 Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.

3. All men who believe

IV. Biblical Real-Life Examples

A. Negative

1. Cain and Abel - Genesis 4

Because Abel's sacrifice was accepted and Cain's was not, Cain harbored anger and bitterness in his heart towards Abel. As a result he became the first murderer.

2. Ahithophel - 2 Samuel 15-17

Ahithophel, Bathsheba's uncle, harbored anger and bitterness in his heart towards David because of his adultery. As a result he joined the rebellion against David and later took his life when Absalom spurned his advice.

B. Positive

1. Joseph - Genesis 37-50

Joseph forgave his brothers of their crime of selling him into slavery. He understood that although his brothers meant it for evil, God meant it for good. When given the opportunity for revenge, he did not take it choosing rather to show kindness to those least deserving of it.

a. The Wrongs

- Hated by his brothers without a cause.
- Sold into slavery when he was 17 or so years old.
- Became a slave to Potiphar, put in charge of his household, only to be accused of rape by his Potiphar's wife who was really trying to seduce Joseph.
- Thrown into prison with no hope of release.
- Became the head of the prison, revealed the dreams of the butler and baker, only to be forgotten by the butler for two years.
- Finally became the prime minister of Egypt when the butler remembered Joseph.

b. The Rights

- He never retaliated against his brothers for what they did to him even when given the perfect opportunity.
- He never retaliated against the butler for forgetting about him.
- He never retaliated against Potiphar or his wife for what they did to him.

- Upon his father's death he was appalled that his brothers would think that he would take vengeance on them.

c. The Perspective

Genesis 50:15-21 And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

2. David and Shimei

In 2 Kings 16 we find David leaving Jerusalem being chased by his son Absalom. As he left, Shimei cursed David and threw stones at him. When the rebellion was crushed, Shimei sought David's forgiveness and received it. Instead of having Shimei put to death, David chose to forgive.

3. Hosea and Gomer

Hosea was told to marry a wife by the name of Gomer who would later become a prostitute. Instead of condemning her as required by the law, Hosea was told to buy her off the slave block and restore her to himself as his wife thus picturing God's relationship with Israel. Although Hosea had every right to have Gomer stoned, he forgave instead.

4. Paul and Mark

On Paul's second missionary journey Mark abandoned him. When he was to start the third, he and Barnabas, Mark's uncle, split company (Acts 15:36ff). Paul went with Silas and Mark went with Barnabas. Later on, however, we read in 2 Timothy that Paul desired to see Mark since Mark was profitable to him. Paul had forgiven Mark because of his abandonment.

5. Philemon and Onesimus - Philemon

Onesimus had been a slave of Philemon's and had escaped with a sum of money making his way to Rome. In Rome he ran into the apostle Paul and became a Christian. Paul sent him back to Philemon, along with the letter of Philemon, asking Philemon to forgive Onesimus. Tradition tells us that he did since we read in ancient church records that one of the pastors of the church in Colossae, the hometown of Philemon, was Onesimus.

IV. Forgiving Others

- A. The Consequences of an Unforgiving Spirit (as found in the tape series by Charles Stanley, *Forgiveness: God's Grace Demonstrated*).

1. It destroys our relationship with God.
2. It can cause physical and emotional problems.
3. It destroys relationships we have with others.
4. It can cause us to be spiritually weak.
5. It gives place to the Devil.
6. It grieves the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 4:30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

7. It can place us under the chastisement of God.
8. It defiles others.

Hebrews 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

9. It troubles us.

Hebrews 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

B. More Consequences of not forgiving others (from the tape Series on *Philemon* by John MacArthur).

1. It will imprison you in your past.

Unforgiveness keeps past pain alive. It will never allow the wounds to heal. As a result, bitterness develops and feeds on itself. You become an angry person.

2. It produces bitterness.

The more you dwell on an offense, the larger it becomes and the more the hurt develops. Bitterness is directly traced to a failure to forgive.

3. It gives Satan an open door

Unresolved anger and bitterness gives place to the Devil.

2 Corinthians 2:10-11 To whom ye forgive any thing, I {forgive} also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave {it}, for your sakes {forgave I it} in the person of Christ; Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

Ephesians 4:26-27 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil.

4. It hinders our fellowship with God.

Matthew 6:14-15 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

5. We become unusable by God.

Because of our broken relationship with God, we cannot be used by Him. We will find ourselves on the shelf or in the dishwasher.

C. The Basis of Forgiving Others.

1. Because of the mercies of God.

Ephesians 4:31-32 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

2. Because of the pattern of Christ.

Colossians 3:13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

3. Because of our new nature in Christ - it is the character of one who is a Christian to forgive.

Colossians 3:12-13 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

4. Because of the commandment of God.

Matthew 18:21-22 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

5. Because God is dishonored when we fail to forgive others.

Philemon 1:5-6 Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

D. The Need to Forgive Others

1. We all offend other believers at times

James 3:2-3 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

2. Our forgiveness from God is based on forgiving others

Matthew 6:14-15 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 5:21-26 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

Luke 6:37 Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

3. Our prayer is hindered by an unforgiving heart

Mark 11:25-26 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

E. The Prerequisites for Forgiving Others

1. Positionally
Always, at all times.
2. Relationally - their asking

Luke 17:3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.

F. The Reasons for Not Forgiving Others

1. As defined by Charles Stanley in the tape series *Forgiveness: God's Grace Demonstrated*
 - a. We are selfish
 - b. We are proud - Satan will use others to keep us from forgiving those who have wronged us
 - c. We have a rebellious spirit - we do not see that God is using the mistreatment of others to develop us spiritually
 - d. We have a low self-esteem - this makes us want to "get even" since someone hurt our self-image
 - e. We substitute coexistence - we just bury our injury and tell ourselves we will go "halfway" and contribute to the relationship 50/50. We tolerate the other person, but fail to really forgive them.

- f. Ignorance - sometimes we do not know that we have an unforgiving spirit
- g. We enjoy self-pity and bask in the attention of others who know how much we have been wronged.
- h. We find it too costly to forgive.
- i. We are more concerned about our rights than God's will.
- j. The people we have an unforgiving attitude are gone or dead.

2. An attitude of bitterness

Ephesians 4:31-32 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

- a. Unresolved anger goes with bitterness
- b. Slander goes with bitterness
- c. Malicious thoughts go with bitterness

G. The Pathology of Forgiveness (as found in the tape series by Charles Stanley, *Forgiveness: God's Grace Demonstrated.*)

- 1. We are wronged.
- 2. Difficulty - we have a problem dealing with the wrong.
- 3. Detour - we forget the wrong.
- 4. Dig a hole - we bury the wrong done to us.
- 5. Denial - we deny the wrong done to us.
- 6. Defeat - we are defeated because of our unforgiving spirit.
- 7. Defiled - we become defiled by an unforgiving spirit and become useless to God.
- 8. Discouragement - we are discouraged in our lives.
- 9. Desperation - we become desperate because of our situation and seek a solution.
- 10. Discover - we recognize our problem and seek someone to help us.
- 11. Deal - we deal with our unforgiving spirit and seek forgiveness from God.
- 12. Deliverance - we are delivered from our unforgiving spirit and find peace in God.

H. How Do I Forgive Others?

1. Repentance - I need to seek God's forgiveness for my sin.
2. Release - I must release the bitterness and angry feelings I have towards the person who has wronged me.
3. Recognition - I must recognize that the person who has wronged me has in doing so uncovered an area of weakness in my life. I see that God has used that person to uncover an unforgiving attitude and as such that the wrong done to me will be used by God to perfect me.
4. Remember - I must remember God's forgiveness for me. My sin to Him is infinitely greater than anyone's sin towards me.
5. Reconciliation - I must then seek to be reconciled to the person who has wronged me.

I. How to tell if we are a forgiving person

1. Am I holding a grudge against anyone for any reason?
2. Am I harboring bitterness in my heart towards anyone else?
3. Can I exult in the successes of those who have wronged me?
4. Do I gloat in the catastrophes of those who have sinned against me?
5. Do I gather sympathy from others because of the wrong done to me?
6. If I had the perfect opportunity to get even, would I?
7. If I was in the position to do something nice for the person who has wronged me, would I?
8. Is my concern for the person who wronged me greater than my concern for the wrong they have done to me?

J. The Profile of a Forgiving Person

1 Corinthians 13:1-8 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

1. A forgiving person suffers long.

The actual word is *makrothumiea*, which means "to put up with others." A forgiving person does not have a short fuse and do not live with chips on their shoulders.

Get some verses on longsuffering.

2. A forgiving person is kind.

Kindness refers to being gracious to others, even when they do not deserve it. It is maintaining one's temper in spite of the caustic actions and words of others. It is also a concern with one's speech in order that we would not inadvertently say something that would hurt another person.

Get some verses on kindness.

3. A forgiving person is not envious of others.

A person who is envious of others will hold grudges against them. Envy will poison one's outlook on life and produce a bitter, resentful spirit towards the good fortunes of others.

Get some verses on envy.

4. A forgiving person is not concerned with their own image and importance.

Those who are forgiving are not so concerned with their own image and importance that they allow the actions of others to insult them. They are more concerned with the welfare and image of others than they are their own.

Philippians 2:6etc.

5. A forgiving person is not puffed up, that is, they do not have a high opinion of themselves.

A forgiving person does not have such an inflated view of themselves that other people insult them easily.

Romans 12:15etc.

6. A forgiving person does not behave in an unseemly manner.

A forgiving person exhibits decorum in their relationships. The phrase "unseemly" actually means "to be rude." Those who are forgiving are not rude, they do not offend others by their actions or words.

7. A forgiving person does not seek their own welfare all the time.

Those who are forgiving are not always looking out for "number one." A person who is preoccupied with themselves will take offense when someone gets ahead of them in line, or gets a little better deal than themselves. This kind of person often sees others as merely being stepping-stones to a higher position.

Phillipians 2:1-4etc.

8. A forgiving person does not is not easily provoked to anger.

A forgiving person does not always "fly off the handle" when provoked by others. Their anger is derived from a sense of God's holiness, not personal affronts.

9. A forgiving person does not always think the worst about others.

The NIV renders this phrase, “keeps no record of wrongs.” A forgiving person does not keep a file on everyone that has wronged them. They are quick to burn the records and forget the offenses just like God has forgiven our offenses and erased His memory of them. A person who maintains a list of wrongs will develop a bitter and angry attitude towards others that will grow over time.

Psalm 103:12etc.

10. A forgiving person does not take pleasure in evil and sin.

A forgiving person takes no delight in evil, which in relationship to them refers to such things as anger, malicious slander, and bitterness.

11. A forgiving person rejoices in truth and integrity.

A forgiving person rejoices in integrity and truth at all times. They do not deal in lies, often fueled by a bitter, angry, and resentful spirit towards others.

12. A forgiving person bears up under abuse.

A forgiving person bears up under the abuse and mistreatment of others as well as the vicissitudes of life. Many times people will get mad at God over some trials He has brought into their life or some disease or misfortune that they have. A forgiving person does not hold grudges against God or others but patiently bears up under such things knowing that it is working out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

2 Corinthians 4:12etc.

13. A forgiving person believes the best about all things.

A forgiving person trusts others even when they have let them down in the past. That does not mean that a forgiving person immediately puts their trust into others when wronged, but they do seek for the time when they can.

14. A forgiving person hopes for the best in others.

A forgiving person always looks for the best in others. They are always seeking to see the good in others and never dwell on the wrongs.

15. A forgiving person endures all things.

A forgiving person will persevere through trials and come out the other side sweeter instead of more bitter.

V. Portraits of Forgiveness

A. Simon and the Prostitute

Luke 7:37-50 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet

with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

1. Significant points of this story

- a. Simon, a Pharisee, had invited Jesus to his home in order to question Him. As they were reclining at the table, a prostitute came in and anointed the feet of Jesus. She exhibited brokenness over her sin and contrition of heart.
- b. Simon, knowing the character of this woman, said to himself that if Jesus knew who this woman was, and He should if he was a prophet, would refuse to allow her to touch him.
- c. Jesus then told Simon a parable of two debtors. One owed his master 500 days wages and the other 50. When neither could pay the Lord forgave them both. Which one would love the master the most.
- d. Simon correctly indicated that it would be the one with the largest debt. Upon hearing this, Jesus forgave the prostitute of her sins.

2. Application of this story

- a. We fall into one of two categories. We are either like the prostitute who knew of her sin and need of forgiveness, or we are like the Pharisee who feel we really aren't all that bad.
- b. If we feel that we are just as good as another, we will not understand the forgiveness of God as well as not understand other people's love for him when God has forgiven them of great sin.

B. The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

Matthew 18:21-35 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord

commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

1. Significant points in this parable

a. The first servant.

The first slave was forgiven an unpayable debt. The amount he owed his lord was an incalculable sum. The word “ten thousand” is *myria*, the word for the highest number in the Greek language. It could be compared to our “zillion.”

b. The sovereign.

The lord, having mercy on this man, forgave him the debt. Undoubtedly the lord was a king, and the man forgiven was a tax-collector over some region. It is interesting to note that the tax receipts for the region of Syria (which included Judea) was around 800 talents per year.

c. The sum.

The sum owed by the first servant was incalculable. It was not possible to repay even if he wanted to and had a lifetime to work on it.

d. The supplication

Because he was not able to pay the debt, the first servant begged his Lord to give him time and he would pay the entire sum. His lord, having compassion, forgave him the debt and released him from his obligation.

e. The second servant.

The second servant owed the first servant a small sum of money, around 100 days wages. When compared to the incalculable sum of money owed by the first servant, this was a pittance.

f. The sorrowful.

When the fellow-servants of these two heard about the unforgiving attitude exhibited by the first servant, they were sorrowful and told

their lord. They knew about the forgiveness of their lord, and were distressed to see that one of their own would not exhibit the same attitude.

g. The sentence.

Because of this unforgiving attitude of the first servant, he was cast into debtors prison until he paid the entire sum of money owed. In his case, this would mean that he would be in prison for life, since he owned what amounted to a nearly infinite sum.

2. The Application

a. The first servant.

We are the first servant. We owe our Lord, God, an infinite debt because of our sin. In fact, this debt is so high that it is not possible to pay it back even if we wanted to.

b. The Sovereign.

It is clear from the context of this passage that the Sovereign is God.

c. The sum

Our debt of sin to God is infinite. We cannot ever hope to pay it off. A lifetime in the Lake of Fire is not sufficient to pay our debt.

d. The supplication.

We as Christians know that our main problem is sin, and as such we need to seek the forgiveness of God. When we sin, we are commanded to confess our sin in order to receive the parental forgiveness of God.

e. The second servant.

The second servant is one of our fellow-believers. This is clear from the context of the passage as well as Peter's question.

f. The sorrowful.

The sorrowful and fellow-believers who observe our unforgiving heart. When we realize just how much we were forgiven, and we see someone fail to do that for others, we are grieved.

g. The sentence.

When we as Christians fail to forgive others, we will not be forgiven ourselves by God. This does not mean that we will go to hell, but our relationship with God is broken and we place ourselves under His rod of chastisement.

3. The Conclusion

a. We have been forgiven an infinite debt by God.

- b. We are to forgive our fellow-believers of their sins to us, which pale into insignificance when we see our debt of sin to God.
- c. When we fail to forgive others, we place ourselves under the chastisement of God.
- C. We are harboring bitterness against another

V. Forgiving Ourselves

A. The Consequences of Refusing to Forgive Ourselves

- 1. We punish ourselves on an on-going and continuing basis
- 2. We live under a cloud of uncertainty - since we can't forgive ourselves we wonder if God can forgive us.
- 3. We develop a sense of unworthiness - we begin thinking that God will not hear us.
- 4. We attempt to overcome our guilt by becoming excessive and compulsive in our behavior.
- 5. We develop a false sense of humility - "I am just so unworthy..."
- 6. We deprive ourselves of things in order to punish ourselves.

B. Why We Don't Forgive Ourselves

- 1. We believe our sin is too great.
- 2. We do not believe God has forgiven us.
 - a. God only has forgiven us of some of our sins
 - b. Christ only died for some of our sins
 - c. God is a liar - Psalm 103:12 etc.
- 3. We feel our forgiveness must be based on our performance.
 - a. We do not understand the nature of Grace.
 - b. We do not believe there is such a thing as a free lunch.
 - c. Everything else in life is performance based.
- 4. We disappoint ourselves - we let ourselves down.
 - a. We don't live up to our own expectations.
 - b. We fail when we expect to succeed.
 - c. We transfer our feelings of unforgiveness to God.
- 5. We emotionally adjust to guilt - it becomes a way of life.

6. We surrender to our feelings of unforgiveness and deny the truth of God's Word and Person.
 7. We have a higher standard than God.
 8. We know that it is probable we will commit the same sin again.
- C. How Do We Forgive Ourselves?
1. Recognize - realize that we have not forgiven ourselves.
 2. Repentance - we repent of the sin of not forgiving ourselves and denying His forgiveness of our sin.
 3. Reaffirm - reaffirm our trust in the testimony of Scripture.
 4. Renounce - renounce our unforgiving attitude towards ourselves.
 5. Rejoice - rejoice in God's forgiveness of our sin and our own forgiveness of ourselves.