

## INTRODUCTION

1. We are continuing in our study of the “one another’s” found in the New Testament.
2. We have already looked at “love one another, bear one another’s burdens, submit to one another, be devoted to one another, give preference to one another, pray for one another, be kind to one another, be of one mind to one another, and in the events of this past week we have seen in a very practical way of how to weep with and comfort one another.”
3. Tonight we are looking at “forgive one another.”
4. It is true that everyone desires forgiveness for the wrongs committed toward others.
5. But not everyone experiences forgiveness.
6. Partially because they do not understand what forgiveness is.
7. C.S. Lewis said, “Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive.”
8. The word “forgive” Gr.aphesis (noun) refers to a “dismissal, release” (Vine) or “to pardon” (MacArthur).

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9. The verb (aphiemi) means, “to send forth or to send away” (Vine).
10. “Forgiveness is the act of setting someone free from an obligation to you that is a result of a wrong done against you” (Charles Stanley, *Forgiveness*, p.16).
11. There are consequences to forgiveness.
12. Just as there are consequences to unforgiveness.
13. I want us to look at that tonight.
14. The first truth that I want us to understand refers to our obligation to forgive.

## **I. Believers Are Obligated to Forgive**

### **A. It Does Not Matter What Someone Has Done to You – You Are to Forgive**

The apostle Paul said in Ephesians 4:32 – “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.”

1. He stated that right after saying, “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice” (v.31).
2. The forgiving you are to do is with “one another.”
3. It is on an equal level as being kind and tenderhearted
4. It’s the only way you will be able to “put away from you” “bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking” and “malice.”

“Those who have been forgiven so much by God should, of all people, forgive the relatively small offenses against them by others” (John Jr MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible, Eph 4:32).

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R.C.H. Lenski writes, “The moment a man wrongs me I must forgive him. Then my soul is free. If I hold the wrong against him I sin against God and against him and jeopardize my forgiveness with God. Whether the man repents, makes amends, asks my pardon or not, makes no difference. I have instantly forgiven him. He must face God with the wrong he has done; but that is his affair and God’s and not mine save that I should help him according to Matt. 18:15, etc. But whether this succeeds or not and before this even begins, I must forgive him.”

The main reason you are to forgive is because you have been forgiven – Paul says, “Just as God in Christ forgave you.”

B. You are to Forgive because Jesus has Forgiven you

1. It begins at Calvary

The basis of His forgiveness is the work of Christ at Calvary.

“Christ died our death. He bore the punishment for our sin. He Himself suffered the wrath of God that we deserved. God ‘made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him’ (John MacArthur, *The Freedom and Power of Forgiveness*, 20).

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2. It is professed in the Gospel
  - a) Peter preaching on the day of Pentecost told his listeners after they asked “what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37), He said to “Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
  - b) He said that the only way to receive *remission of sins* is to repent

“Remission” Gr.aphesis (noun), “a dismissal, release or pardon”
  - c) Paul said of Jesus in Ephesians 1:7 - “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”
  - d) Jesus is the only One who can forgive sin
    - (1) Peter said this in Acts 4:12 - “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name given among men by which we must be saved.”

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- (2) Jesus demonstrated this in Mat.9:1-6
- (3) Jesus forgave sin even while bearing our sin on the cross - Luke 23:39-43

Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

- 3. It continues throughout your walk with Jesus
  - a) Jesus taught forgiveness in the disciples' prayer (Mat.6:9-13)
    - (1) "Opheilema (debts) is one of five New Testament Greek terms for sin.

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It is used only a few times in the New Testament, but its verb form is found often. Of the some thirty times it is used in its verb form, twenty-five times it refers to moral or spiritual debts.

Sin is a moral and spiritual debt to God that must be paid. In his account of this prayer, Luke uses hamartia ("sins"; Luke 11:4), clearly indicating that the reference is to sin, not to a financial debt. Matthew probably used debts because it corresponded to the most common Aramaic term for sin used by Jews of that day, which also represented moral or spiritual debt to God" (John MacArthur, *Matthew*).

The other words used for sin are:

- (2) Hamartia is the most common and carries the root idea of missing the mark.

Sin misses the mark of God's standard of righteousness.

- (3) Paraptoma, often rendered "trespass," is

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the sin of slipping or falling, and results more from carelessness than from intentional disobedience.

(4) Parabasis refers to stepping across the line, going beyond the limits prescribed by God, and is often translated "transgression." This sin is more conscious and intentional than hamartia and paraptoma.

(5) Anomia means lawlessness, and is a still more intentional and flagrant sin. It is direct and open rebellion against God and His ways.

b) Jesus taught that your forgiveness from the Father depends on your forgiveness of others (Mat.6:14-15)

“Believers cannot know the parental forgiveness, which keeps fellowship with the Lord rich and blessings from the Lord profuse, apart from forgiving others in heart and word.”

“The sin of an unforgiving heart and a bitter spirit (Heb. 12:15) forfeits blessing and invites



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judgment. Even the Talmud taught that he who is indulgent toward others' faults will be mercifully dealt with by the Supreme Judge (Shabbath 151b) (John MacArthur, *Matthew*).

John Owen said, "Our forgiving of others will not procure forgiveness for ourselves; but our not forgiving others proves that we ourselves are not forgiven" (The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations).

- c) Jesus taught that forgiveness has no limits

Matthew 18:21-22 - "Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

"Forgiveness is a required course" (Charles Swindoll). It is "not an occasional act, it is a permanent attitude" (Martin Luther).

1 Cor.13:5 teaches that love "keeps no record of wrongs."

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- d) Because you have received God's forgiveness you are to show that to others
- (1) Paul's words to the Colossians was "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 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" (Col.3:12-13).
  - (2) Notice the example of Esau to Jacob in Gen.33:4-15
  - (3) Notice the example of Joseph in Gen.50:15-21
  - (4) Even Stephen forgave his enemies in Acts 7:60 when he "knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' And when he has said this, he fell asleep."

We are to forgive because:

## **II. Believers Are Able to Forgive**

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A. Because You Have Been Forgiven You Are Given the Capacity to Forgive

1. Jesus illustrates this in our worship - Mat.5:23-24

“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

John Walvoord says, “Such wrongful attitudes should be dealt with and made right. Reconciliation between brothers must be accomplished whether the ‘innocent’ (5:23-24) or the ‘offending’ (vv. 25-26) brother takes the first step. Without such reconciliation, gifts presented at the altar mean nothing” (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, 2:30).

2. Jesus commands this in the fellowship - Mat.18:15-17

“There are times when sin has to be dealt with through confrontation.

And if the guilty party refuses to repent, the ultimate result may mean excommunication from the church.

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This is true chiefly when the offender's sin has a potential to continue working injury, or when the offense brings a public reproach on the name of Christ" (John MacArthur, *The Freedom and Power of Forgiveness*, 137).

After all the steps of Matthew 18:15-17 have been exhausted, he is put out of the church and treated like a "heathen and a tax collector."

What does that mean? It means he is regarded as an unbeliever.

The repeated hardening of his heart calls his faith into question.

Now he is regarded as an evangelistic prospect rather than a brother in the Lord.

"Implicit in this is the revocation of his membership. He is no longer to be deemed a member of the body. Rather, he should be regarded as an unbeliever, and therefore he should not be permitted to participate in the blessings and the benefits of the Christian assembly. In particular, he should not be welcomed as a communicant in the celebration of the Lord's Table. That is precisely what the term

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excommunication means.

But as far as the treatment extended to him by church members is concerned, this is no license for hostility or contempt.

In fact, Christ's treatment of heathens and tax collectors is notable chiefly because of how He reached out to them in love.

A similar kind of compassionate evangelistic pursuit should characterize our treatment of those who have been excommunicated in this manner, with one significant difference: as long as the 'so-called brother' (1 Cor. 5:11) remains unrepentant, believers must not carry on a relationship with that person as if nothing were wrong.

In order to send clear signals both to the sinning individual and the watching world, even fellowship in everyday social settings is to be suspended. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 5:9:11:

“I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would

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have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.”

In 2 Thessalonians 3:6 Paul underscored this distinction between everyday unbelievers and professing Christians who live like unbelievers:

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.”

Likewise, in Romans 16:17-18 he wrote, “Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those [in the church] who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.”

In other words, because of the strong tendency for people to be deceived by someone who professes faith in Christ and yet lives a disobedient life, the

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lines must be drawn as clearly as possible. We are supposed to have as little association as possible with such people.

Again, the point is not to be antagonistic or malevolent toward them, but to make clear that willful sin is incompatible with Christian fellowship.

Since this person has identified with Christ and is a 'so-called brother,' it becomes vitally important for the fellowship as a whole to demonstrate that this person's deliberate rebellion against Christ is incompatible with a profession of faith in Him.

Even at this point, however, the primary goal with regard to the offender is to win him back.

Second Thessalonians 3:15 says, "And yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."

There is a sense in which you never really let him go; though you put him out of the church and out of your sphere of social fellowship, you keep calling him back.

If the offender at any time demonstrates genuine

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repentance, he is to be welcomed back into the fellowship. But until that point, he is to be regarded as an outsider” (John MacArthur, *The Freedom and Power of Forgiveness*, 152).

3. Because you have the Holy Spirit you have the capacity to forgive - Gal.5:22-23

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”

- B. When You Choose Not to Forgive You Are Welcoming a Host of Trouble

Warren Wiersbe says, “Sinful anger must be faced honestly and must be confessed to God as sin. We must go to our brother and get the matter settled, and we must do it quickly. The longer we wait, the worse the bondage becomes! We put ourselves into a terrible prison when we refuse to be reconciled. (See Matt. 18:15-20 for additional counsel.) It has well been said that the person who refuses to forgive his brother destroys the very bridge over which he himself must walk” (*The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Mt 5:21).



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Unforgiveness gives birth to:

1. Bitterness

Webster defines “bitter” as “sharp and disagreeable; harsh; severe; piercing, characterized by strong feelings of hatred, resentment” (*Webster’s New World Dictionary*, Second College Edition, p.145).

Charles Stanley says in his book *Forgiveness* that “Bitterness can be *justified* so easily.” But we must remember “The day we received Jesus as our Savior, we forsook all rights to be bitter. We must put all bitterness from us and guard against it taking root in our lives – no matter what happens, no matter how despicably we are treated.”

- a) Ephesians 4:31 - “Let all bitterness...be put away from you.”
- b) Hebrews 12:14-15 - “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.”

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Unforgiveness then manifests itself outwardly by:

2. Resistance

- a) In Acts 7:51 Stephen told the Jewish leaders, “You always *resist* the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.”

“The Jewish people had become bitter and resistant to the Gospel and they did not want to hear what Stephen had to say about it.”

- b) Acts 7:57 says, “They...stopped their ears...and stoned him.”

“Their bitterness and resistance led to murder.”

Unforgiveness finally climaxes with:

3. Murder

- a) Genesis 4:8 - “Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.”
- b) 1 John 3:11-12 - “For this is the message that

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you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous."

## CONCLUSION

1. Who is the author of bitterness, resistance, and murder? The Devil.
2. Jesus said to the Jewish leaders who were bitter, resistant and murdering the prophets:

"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."

"It is cheaper to pardon than to resent. Forgiveness saves the expense of anger, the cost of hatred" (Hannah Moore [1745-1833] Drapers).

3. Instead of becoming bitter and resistant we are to forgive and be kind to one another (Eph.4:32).

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4. Why are we to forgive? Because Jesus has forgiven you.
5. Has Jesus forgiven you of all your sin?
6. He can right now.
7. Let's pray.