



APHIEMI

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FORGIVENESS

What is forgiveness? Some thoughts from Mr. McKenzie: "Sign on a company bulletin board in Grand Rapids: 'To err is human, to forgive is not company policy.'" "Have you noticed that it's much easier to forgive an enemy after you get even with him?" (McKenzie, E.C.; "14,000 QUIPS AND QUOTES FOR WRITERS AND SPEAKERS"; New York: Greenwich House, 1980)

The result of God's forgiveness: Rom. 5:18, "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."

Acts 13:37-39, "But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore, men [and] brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

Some suggest that forgiveness pardons us for our sins. We are more than pardoned. We are righteous because we paid for our sins. We did not personally pay the price, but Christ paid the price for us.

Forgiveness is a part of our salvation. "The forgiveness of sin is accomplished for the sinner when he believes upon Christ and is a part of his salvation. Many things which constitute salvation are wrought of God at the moment one believes; but forgiveness is never received by the unsaved apart from the whole work of saving grace or the ground of believing on Christ as savior." (Taken from the book, MAJOR BIBLE THEMES by Lewis Sperry Chafer and John F. Walvoord. First edition copyright 1926, 1953 by Dallas Theological Seminary. Revised edition copyright 1974 by Dallas Theological Seminary. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. p 186)

One of the word's translated forgiveness is Strong's number 859, which is the Greek word "aphesis" which is translated forgiveness six times, but it is also translated liberty, deliverance and remission. (remission being the more common translation)

Vine tells us that aphasis "denotes a dismissal, release." (Vine, W. E.; "AN EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF NEW TESTAMENT WORDS"; Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co.) Christ used the term to portray the loosing of those that were in bonds (Luke 4:18-19) It relates to the freeing from sin, or the removal of the handcuffs and release from prison.

Forgiveness is available through the shed blood of Christ. Matt 26:28 and Col. 1:14 both boldly set forth this fact. We have forgiveness because of the blood that was shed. Indeed, there is no forgiveness from God except through the shed blood of Christ. The Old Testament saints brought their blood offering to COVER their sins, until the perfect sacrifice could be offered in the heavenly holy of holies.

The Old Testament saint was required to bring a sacrifice for a covering for his sin, due to the fact that there was no finished work accomplished, whereby sin could be taken away. The blood of animals covered until the blood of Christ took the sin away.

Forgiveness comes from repentance. 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." This invitation was to gain the remission, or forgiveness of sins. We have seen in previous studies that repentance is one of the first steps toward the salvation that is offered.

Forgiveness is based on different things in different economies. "Though, on the divine side, the freedom to forgive sin is always secured, directly or indirectly, through the blood of Christ, the requirements on the human side vary to some extent with the different ages of time. During the period between Abel [I would say Adam not Abel personally] and Christ, forgiveness was made, on the human side, to depend on the presentation of a specified sacrifice. During the present age, it is made to depend, for the unsaved, on faith in Christ; but for the saved, who are already under the value of Christ's blood, forgiveness is made to depend upon confession and is impelled by the fact that God has already forgiven (Eph. 4:32)." (Chafer, Lewis Sperry; "SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY"; Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947, Vol. II. p 272)

Forgiveness comes from God. Mk. 2:7,10, "Why doth this [man] thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, [Thy] sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)" Even the Jews that rejected Christ knew that forgiveness could only come from God. So why do so many seek forgiveness through works and deeds?

Forgiveness may be a SLIGHTLY post salvation item. Acts 26:18, "To open their eyes, [and] to turn [them] from darkness to light, and [from] the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." The phrases "turned to light" and "released from the power of Satan" precede the forgiveness. The action of the Holy Spirit linked with the persons belief system evidently brings the person into a place where they can see adequately and begin to respond to God, even before their forgiveness is realized.

Forgiveness is expressed in many ways. I would like to list some of these for you. Isa 38:17 "Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back"; Mic. 7:19 "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea"; Jer. 31:34 "I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more"; Isa 43:25 "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions"; Ps. 103:12 "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

Forgiveness may be a synonym for justification. This is the thought presented in THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARD BIBLE ENCYCLOPEDIA. "Paul rarely uses the term "forgiveness," but in its place prefers justification. They are to his understanding practically synonymous (Stemen's, Theology of the New Testament, 418) He preferred the latter, however, because it was better fitted to express the idea of secure, present and permanent acceptance in the sight of God. It connoted both a complete and a permanent state of grace. In popular thought forgiveness is not so comprehensive, but in the Bible sense it means no less than this. It removes all of the guilt and cause of alienation from the past; it assures a state of grace for the present; and promises Divine mercy and aid for the future. Its fulness cannot adequately be conveyed by any one term or formula." (Orr, James; "THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARD BIBLE ENCYCLOPEDIA"; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1939, par. 7)

We have only looked at one of the Greek terms translated forgiveness. I would like to just list the others and share some of Vine's comments on these.

"aphiemi" "primarily, to send forth, send away...denotes, besides its other meanings, to remit or forgive" "firstly signifies the remission of the punishment due to sinful conduct, the deliverance of the sinner from the penalty Divinely, and therefore righteously, imposed; secondly, it involves the complete removal of the cause of offence; such remission is based upon the vicarious and propitiatory sacrifice of Christ."

"charizomai" "to bestow a favour unconditionally, is used of the act of forgiveness, whether Divine, Eph. 4:32; Col. 2:13;3:13; or human, Luke 7:42,43 (debt); II Cor. 2:7,10..."

Scofield says of forgiveness, "It means, TO SEND OFF or AWAY. And this, throughout Scripture, is the one fundamental meaning of forgiveness -- to separate the sin from the sinner."

Unger states in his dictionary, "Forgiveness under this consideration [for the unsaved] is never an isolated operation but always connected as an integral part of the whole divine undertaking for man called "salvation." Forgiveness is only one of the many transformations wrought of God in the unsaved in response to simple faith in Christ." (Taken from: "UNGER'S BIBLE DICTIONARY"; Unger, Merrill F.; Copyright 1957, Moody Bible Institute of Chicago; Moody Press. Used by permission.)

Chafer mentions, "The underlying thought which the word FORGIVE universally conveys when expressing the act of God is that of putting away, releasing, or pardoning. It is the taking away of sin and its condemnation from the offender, or offenders, by imputing the sin to, and imposing its righteous judgments upon, Another." (Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p 270)

APPLICATION:

1. A person is forgiven of ALL, sins at salvation! God doesn't select out a few choice ones to hide away so He can bring them out later to beat you over the head with. ALL ARE GONE.

As a believer, as you confess them, they are also, ALL GONE.

2. If a person wants forgiveness - salvation is the only way to receive it - that is, true, eternal forgiveness.

3. All sin is cared for at once - all penalties and causes. Just after salvation we are without sin.

How hard is it to be saved? So simple a child can do it. You simply reach out and take the gift.

So apply that to Col 2:6, "As ye have, therefore received Christ Jesus the lord, so walk ye in Him," Your walk should be as easy as your salvation.

Realize that one! How does that relate to the terrible struggle that supposedly goes on between what is taught, as the old and new nature? There is no struggle. You accept the walk of the Spirit, and enjoy it.

4. If you were given a new car, with a twenty five coat of candy apple red paint job, wouldn't you wash it when it got dirty? Wouldn't you park in a garage to keep it clean? So, why do so many Christian's allow their new soul paint job get so dirty before confessing?

Forgiveness at salvation should be special, and we should want to keep clean. I John 1:9 is not limited. You can use it at any time of the day, at any time of the week, and at any time in the year. God provided all that is necessary for us to continue on in holiness. All we need to do, is to make mental decisions in keeping with that provision.



The Forgiving Community

By William Klassen

253 pp. Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1966. \$6.00.

Forgiveness is a perennial theme so close to the heart of both our cultural and religious heritage that it is taken for granted and little understood. It has to do with the "loosing" of the "binding" restraints of authority, and recently has again been in the spotlight because of the wide-



spread feeling that there has been altogether too much of this "loosing" of late-that we have been too forgiving of moral laxity, intellectual uncertainty, and lack of personal direction in life. O. Hobart Mowrer has done much to stir this feeling, as a psychologist who has taken an interest in religion. Mowrer claims to have discovered an identical inner flaw in both Calvinism and Freudianism-namely, that they are too forgiving of man's weaknesses. On the other hand, many voices cry that there is altogether too little "loosing" of the cultural bonds-especially the voices of young people with alienated identities. Closer to the center, pastoral theologians as diverse in other respects as Eduard Thurneysen and James G. Emerson have made the concept of forgiveness the center of their thinking.

All this makes William Klassen's new study of forgiveness, *The Forgiving Community*, a timely contribution. Although Klassen does not explicitly set out to resolve all the questions suggested above, he does provide us with a detailed exegetical study of the biblical treatment of forgiveness, which goes a long way toward clarifying the basis upon which contemporary discussion must rest. Not that Klassen is uninterested in or uninformed about these current issues, as witness his chapters in Part Four, "Forgiveness in the Life of the Contemporary Church." There he tackles the difficult question of church discipline (a cautious vote for it-when directed toward forgiveness), offers a telling critique of Mowrer on the ground of his superficial view of sin and distortion of confession into a kind of penance, deals helpfully if not exhaustively with the question of forgiveness in psychiatry (including self-forgiveness), and urges some form of public confession for church members who are able.

As stimulating and penetrating as some of this material is, it does not make the same order of solid contribution to the study of the question of forgiveness as does his biblical exploration. Here, Klassen, in his home milieu, commands the range of scholarship necessary for the elucidation of his primary concern, which he describes as "an intimate acquaintance with the historical context of forgiveness in the Old and New Testaments" (p. 16). This reviewer is not qualified to comment in detail on the validity of Klassen's exegesis, but his arguments for his findings are impressive. These may be summarized as follows: Forgiveness is a pervasive motif in the Old Testament, where it is primarily an action of God, who because it is his nature, forgives (pardons or remits) man's sinful violation of his covenant relation. In the New Testament we see Jesus Christ bringing the ability to forgive sins down to earth, so to speak, and in Klassen's opinion, leaving it there in the church, the forgiving community.

There is thus great continuity of treatment of the theme of forgiveness



between the Testaments, as well as in the Judaism of the New Testament period. Contrary to some thought of the past, there is even more explicit attention to forgiveness in the Old Testament than in the New. Moreover, the motivation of God in forgiving, that of faithfulness to his own nature, is a feature of New Testament thought as well as that of the Old Testament, as is the intimate connection between sin and sickness, forgiveness and healing. Underlying this continuity is the concept of covenant law, whose breach requires forgiveness. God's forgiving does not alter this legal framework; it rather transcends it in response to an even higher law in his own nature. It is important to note this, for some modern writers wish to deal with forgiveness apart from the consideration of law. This is a serious mistake, as I have tried to show elsewhere. (Cf. "Reconciliation, Forgiveness, Lost Contracts," THEOLOGY TODAY, XXIII, No. 1 [April 1966], pp. 44-59.)

There is also discontinuity in the way the theme is treated in the two Testaments, in addition to the central difference made by the coming of the Messiah. The most interesting is that the Greek verb *aphiemi*, which literally means to send away or let go, is never used to translate *salach*, the Hebrew verb which is translated to forgive. This, among other considerations, has given rise to the thought that John the Baptist meant that sin should be put aside or sent away literally-in the sense that the sinner is to be henceforth free from sin. Klassen is tempted by this interpretation, but does not find it adequate for understanding the actions of Jesus. I think that the verb *aphiemi* suggests the action of letting the person (and his sin) go, or releasing him-in the sense of not holding him in a relationship of bondage. In any case, the flavor of the term in the New Testament often has a more personal connotation than it does in the Old-especially in the writings of Paul, where the verb *charizomai* is found, with its connotation of graciousness.

I find points to dispute with Klassen in his treatment of Thurneysen, whose position he accepts too uncritically, in his treatment of self-forgiveness which he rejects on *a priori* grounds, and find that his position on discipline is probably not realistic in the current situation in many churches, since it assumes that the member being rebuked or admonished has so much commitment to the particular church that he will accept the discipline without leaving the church. In the Mennonite tradition in which Klassen was nurtured this may still be the case in many instances.

Taken as a whole, however, I believe this will be the text on forgiveness most often referred to in this generation.

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Date: 10-01-90 (08:37) Theology Number: 121
 To: ALL
 From: JOHN LIPSCOMB Read: 10-02-90 (18:52)
 Subj: FORGIVENESS

GREAT WORDS OF THE SCRIPTURE...

A weekly column of the THEOLOGY CONFERENCE, NewLIFE Network

"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins..."
 Acts 13.38

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace..."
 Ephesians 1.7

The English language depicts forgiveness as an accomplishment occurring in a moment of time, providing consequences to both forgiver and forgiven that are eternal in scope.

"Forgive - To cease to feel resentment against (an offender): Pardon (one's enemies). To give up resentment or claim to requital for (an insult). To grant relief from payment of (a debt)." Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 484.

Three key features of forgiveness include:

1. Action, by the person forgiving (whether to person being forgiven responds or not).
2. Cessation of any resentment, by the person forgiving.
3. Termination of any further claims against the offending party, by the person forgiving.

The Greek New Testament contains two principle words that are translated "forgive, forgiveness." These terms are:

APHIEMI, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, # 863. This is the verb form of APHESIS, Strong's # 859. This term means: "...primarily, to send forth, send away (APO, from, HIEMI, to send), denotes besides its other meanings, to remit or forgive..." Vine, W.E., The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, p. 452.

Describing the "forgiveness of sins" as applicable to this term, Vine states:

"In this latter respect the verb, like its corresponding noun, firstly signifies the remission of the punishment due to sinful conduct, the deliverance of the sinner from the penalty Divinely, and therefore righteously, imposed; secondly, it involves the complete removal of the cause of offense; such remission is based upon the vicarious and propitiatory sacrifice of Christ." Vine, W.E., p. 452.

The second Greek word, translated "forgive" is the term: "CHARIZOMAI, Strong's # 5483. To bestow a favor unconditionally,

is used of the act of forgiveness, whether Divine, Eph. 4.32; Col. 2.12, 3.13; or human, Luke 7.42-43 (debt); 2 Cor. 2.7, 10, 12.13..." Vine, p. 453.

"The foundational truth respecting the believer in relation to his sins is the fact that when he was saved all his trespasses (the past, present, and future)- so far as condemnation may be concerned- were forgiven. This must be the meaning of the Apostle's word in Colossians 2.13, 'having forgiven you all trespasses.' So complete proves this divine dealing with all sin that it can be said, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 8.1). The believer is not condemned (John 3.18), and therefore shall not come into judgment ('condemnation,' John 5.24). It need only be remembered that since Christ has borne all sin and since the believer's standing is complete in the risen Christ, he is perfected forever by reason of being in Christ. As a member in the household and family of God, the Christian- should he sin- of course is, as any child, subject to chastisement from the Father, but never to be condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11.31-32)." Chafer, L.S., Systematic Theology, Vol. VII, p. 163.

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Aphiemi

by Steve Stafford

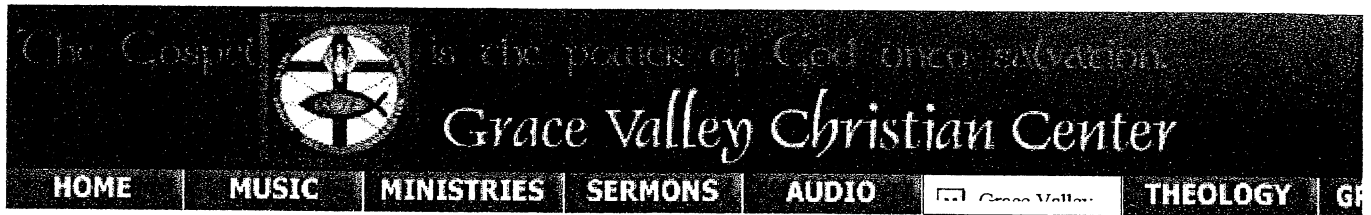
"Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. Micah 7:18

It was this past Saturday night when our close friends told us the joyful news. Their brother-in-law had been pardoned from prison by former President Bill Clinton.

The news arrived to the prison at 5:00 a.m., by way of a fax. The prison officials were instructed to release Wayne immediately. Talk about a wake up call. The prison guard bangs on the cold steel bars that have kept you a prisoner for six or more years and tells you that you are free, you can leave. Thinking that you must be dreaming, you ask "how" or "why"? "President Clinton has pardoned you and not only that but the fine that you owe, you don't have to pay it," responds the prison official. You think it is a joke or some kind of trick that the guards like to play on the inmates. Now you are being escorted out of captivity by two armed guards and you are outside. You look back at the walls that have stifled your existence and realize that you are FREE! The crime that was committed and punishment that you deserved are now forgiven.

The Greek work for forgiveness is aphiemi, which means to leave, give up, to pardon, or release from guilt or punishment. We do not have to wait on a President to randomly forgive us of the sin or crime that we have committed. There is a God who delights in showing us mercy. All we have to do is ask Him with a heart that is sincere. The punishment that we deserve...it is forgiven. (Pay attention to the next part) The guilt that we should experience...forgiven.

I wonder if when Wayne was released from prison if he ever looked back and said to himself, "I'll be back." There are those of us who have been set free but make the mistake of looking back and not fully accepting the pardon. Then there are some who have become comfortable with "jail." They can't imagine that anything could be better, how sad. Choose freedom.



FORGIVING AND FORGIVENESS

by P. G. Mathew, M.A., M.Div., Th.M.

Of all the world's religions, only Christianity offers complete forgiveness. Only the Bible—consisting of the Old and New Testaments—reveals to us an infinite, personal God who has a plan by which he completely forgives the sins of everyone who repents and believes in Jesus Christ. And this God not only forgives sins, but he forgives them forever.

What is this wonderful, biblical forgiveness? There are several words used for forgiveness in the Bible: three Hebrew words in the Old Testament and four Greek words in the New Testament. The first Hebrew word is *kafar*, from which we get the meaning "to cover," as in, "to cover or blot out our sins." The second word is *nasa*, which means "to bear, to take away." The third word is *salach*, which is used only with reference to God forgiving the sins of people. It means "to pardon," as in, "our God [who will] freely pardon." (Isaiah 55:7)

In the New Testament, first you find the Greek word *apoluein*, which means "to release." There also is the wonderful word *charizomai*, which comes from the word *charis*, or "grace." *Charizomai* means "to grace you," to freely give you heaven when you deserve hell. What a truly beautiful word! The third word is *aphesis*, from the Greek word *aphiemi*, "to send away." Finally, there is *pareisis*, which means "to disregard"—this word is used in the context that God will not see our offenses, but rather will disregard them.

HUMILITY: THE CONTEXT OF FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is a key biblical concept in relation to our salvation. It is also key in its practical application in the Christian's life. Jesus taught on this subject in Matthew 18:21-35, in the midst of a chapter dealing with the importance of humility. In Matthew 18:1, the question was asked: "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And Jesus answered in verse 4 that "whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." In other words, the greatest has the most humility. This is echoed in Mark 10:43-44: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all." In Matthew 18:6-14, Jesus continued by teaching the importance of being vigilant in our conduct. Our behavior should not cause any child of God to sin, for each is precious to God.

In verses 15-17, we are given instructions for restoring a brother who has sinned. What should the offended party do? "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector." In other words, if a brother sins against another brother, he needs to be reprovved. Confront him until he is brought to his senses, that he may repent and be restored to the church. Why? Christ the Lord of the church requires his church to be

characterized by unity and purity. If the offending party repents, he is to be restored; but if he remains unrepentant even in spite of the ministry of the whole church, he is to be excommunicated—that is, put out of the church and regarded as an unbeliever. God will deal with him, and the church will be cleansed of the evil of disunity.

What if you are the offending party? In Matthew 5:23-24, Christ taught that "if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." If you come to worship and remember that you wronged your brother, the counsel given is not to begin worship, but to go and be reconciled to your brother. God gives the remembrance of the offense so that you can reconcile immediately before you worship. Our God is holy. His eyes are too pure to behold sin; in fact, he is angry at the sinner every day. Therefore, if you remember that you have sinned against someone, go immediately and be reconciled to that person. You must do this before you can offer worship that is acceptable to this holy God.

"HOW MANY TIMES SHALL I FORGIVE?"

After listening to Jesus' teaching on reconciliation, unity, restoration and forgiveness, Peter asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" (Matt. 18:21) Peter thought seven times would be very generous. It was the rabbinic teaching that a man must forgive three times. One rabbi said that if a man committed an offense once, twice or even three times, you must forgive him, but by the fourth time you did not have to forgive him. Peter understood this idea, and being very generous, he doubled it and added one more time for good measure. So he asked Jesus what he thought: "Up to seven times?" I am sure he expected to be commended for his gracious attitude.

Jesus' answer surprised Peter. Peter's problem was that he was still thinking in terms of justice and legality. Jesus' reply was not based on law and justice, but based on the gospel of grace. "Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times,'" (Matt. 18:22) meaning without limit!

Jesus' answer contrasts with that of Lamech in Genesis 4:24. A descendant of Cain, Lamech boasted about his ability to avenge himself on his enemies. He says, "If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times." Lamech, as an unbeliever, was boasting that he would practice unlimited revenge. But in the gospel this is reversed. If a sinner is saved by Christ and transformed by the gospel, he now must forgive his brothers without limit. So Jesus told Peter that even seven times was not generous enough. He needed to forgive his brother as God in Christ forgave him: limitlessly.

In Luke 17:3-4, Jesus likewise taught, "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him." Again, the disciples were surprised and said, "Increase our faith!" (Luke 17:5). This is proper. Only when we grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ, and increase in faith, will we also increase in forgiveness and mercy. Then we will understand that we live every moment of our lives, not on the basis of justice, but on the basis of mercy received from heaven. Justice would have sent us to hell. How soon Christians forget and begin to act on the basis of law and justice! We need greater faith, greater love for God and greater appreciation of God's grace, in order that we may rise to this level of practicing unlimited forgiveness to our brothers and sisters.

THE PARABLE OF THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

To drive home his teaching about unlimited forgiveness, Jesus told a parable to his disciples. (Matt. 18:23-35) There was a king, representing the King of heaven, to whom people owed great debts. A man who owed 10,000 talents was brought before him. The words used to describe this debt demonstrated its enormity. Ten thousand was the highest number in daily use, and the talent was the highest unit of money. Although it is not specified, we can also assume that the talents were made of gold. In his book, *The Parables of Jesus* (Moody Press, 1983, p. 183), Dr. James M. Boice figured the debt in today's values: if there were ten thousand talents, each talent weighing seventy-five pounds, and if each pound was 12 ounces and each ounce of gold would be worth about \$400, then this man's debt would be about \$3.6 billion. The idea is this: that this man's debt was infinite, and he was absolutely incapable of paying it. In the same way, the debt we owe God is of infinite proportion.

This man could not pay up, and the great king commanded that the servant, his wife, his children, and all he owned be sold to cover the debt. The man fell down before the king. "Be patient with me," he begged, "and I will pay back everything." (Matt. 18:26) Of course, he could not do that. It was impossible, and the king knew it. We are told, though, that the king was moved with compassion to release the man and forgive him all his debt. The man was free! He owed absolutely nothing. Through the king's great mercy alone, he was forgiven his infinite debt.

But in Matthew 18:28 we see the forgiven man looking for a fellow servant who owed him 100 denarii, which would today equal about \$4,000 (Boice, *Parables of Jesus*, p. 183). Compared to his own infinite debt, this was nothing! But when he found the man, he grabbed him, choked him and demanded his money. This other man also fell down and begged for patience. But the forgiven servant was not moved by any kind of compassion. His heart had not been changed in any way by his master's merciful actions. Even though the debt was comparatively nothing, he showed no mercy and threw the man into prison until the debt could be paid.

The great king was told about this wretched man's cruel behavior. "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'" Then the master dealt with the unforgiving man according to law instead of mercy. "In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed." That represents eternal hell. Then Jesus made this stunning declaration: "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." (Matt. 18:32-35) In effect, Jesus answered Peter's question: "You have received unlimited mercy from God through me; therefore, you must demonstrate unlimited mercy."

So we see that there are two bases for dealing with sin: one is mercy and the other is justice. Both are reflected in Exodus 34:6-7: "And [the Lord] passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.'" That's mercy! But it continues: "Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation." That's justice.

LESSONS FROM THE PARABLE

What can we learn from this parable?

1. **All are God's debtors.** The Bible clearly teaches that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23) And again it says, "There is no one righteous, not even one." (Rom. 3:10) In Psalm 40:12, we read, "For troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me." This is a good description of our situation. We are born sinners. We practice sin every day and commit an unmeasurable amount of sin during the course of our lifetime. All are debtors to the infinite, personal, almighty, all-holy God. Even one sin by a creature against the infinite God is infinite, and worthy of infinite punishment in hell.

2. **There is a day of judgment.** "Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment." (Heb. 9:27) St. Paul spoke about this in Acts 17:31, "For [God] has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed." This man is Jesus Christ. In Ecclesiastes 12:14 we read: "God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil." In Deuteronomy 32:35 God says, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them." Jonathan Edwards, the great Puritan theologian, preached his famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God," from this passage. And in Revelation 20:12, we find the Judge opening the books, and dealing with every person who will not bow down before God now and beg for mercy. They will see him then as Judge, dealing with everything on the basis of justice.

3. **There is a great King, who is Jesus Christ.** Jesus Christ humbled himself, became man, and died the death of a criminal. In so doing, he received upon himself the totality of the wrath that was against all who trust in him. God exalted this Jesus and made him Lord and Christ. To him was given a name "that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2:9,10). Jesus Christ is the King.

4. **No one can pay back this infinite debt.** It is impossible! As it says in Psalm 49:7-8, "No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him-the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough." God says in Jeremiah 2:22, "Although you wash yourself with soda and use an abundance of soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me." Romans 3:20 states, "No one will be declared righteous in [God's] sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin." These scriptures demonstrate that our sin against God is an infinite debt that we cannot possibly pay back.

5. **There is only one way of settling this debt now.** In his mercy, God sent his Son to redeem us from our infinite debt. We see this way of mercy in Matthew 20:28: "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Romans 3:24 speaks of "the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." We were ransomed, we were redeemed by Jesus Christ. He offered himself as a sacrifice of propitiation which turned away the wrath of God from us. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor. 5:21) In Isaiah 53, we read how the Lord put all of our sin upon his suffering servant, allowing him to be crushed. His blood atoned for our sin. "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness," but at the same time, "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." (Heb. 9:22, 10:4) It is only the blood of Jesus Christ that is able to cover and blot out our sins forever and ever.

If a person repents and believes in Jesus Christ, his sins shall be forgiven in totality, forever. Only the religion of the Bible tells us of a God who will forgive us all our sins and clothe us with his

righteousness. No other religion has this message. Oh, the beauty of forgiveness based on repentance and faith in Christ! As it declares in Psalm 103:12, "as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." Isn't that wonderful? Isaiah 43:25 says, "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more." He blots them out! And in Psalm 130:4, the psalmist says: "But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared." Micah declares, "Who is a God like you, who pardons sins and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:18-19)

6. ***We need to be merciful.*** No one who has truly received forgiveness from God will act toward others based on justice. We will fear God and live on the basis of mercy. This is taught in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." (Matt. 5:7) If you are a Christian, you have received infinite mercy from God. You did not want him to deal with you on the basis of justice, but you pleaded for mercy, and he showed mercy. So also you must live, not on the basis of justice, but in mercy toward those who may sin against you.

The forgiven must forgive. Our forgiving others is the proof that we have been truly forgiven. We read about this in Luke 7:36-50. Jesus Christ was invited to dinner by a Pharisee named Simon, but he was not properly welcomed when he arrived. He was not given any water to wash his feet, nor the customary welcoming kiss, nor the anointing oil usually given to an honored guest. But while he was there, a woman who had lived a wicked life came to the house. She had received mercy and forgiveness, and when she came to Jesus, she washed his feet with her tears of joy, dried them with her hair, kissed them again and again, and poured expensive perfume upon Jesus. So Jesus asked Simon: "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" And very reluctantly the correct answer came: "The one who had the bigger debt canceled."

We have been forgiven an infinite debt! If we understand how great that debt was, we will overflow with love and gratitude for this merciful Lord, and we will overflow with mercy towards others. How dare we not live in forgiveness and in mercy! If you are a true Christian, you will adore God for showing you mercy. You will love God and you will love his people. An unforgiving person in the church of Jesus Christ proves that he or she is false in his or her claim to be a Christian. Such a person will be dealt with on the basis of God's justice on the day of judgment. That person will be sent to hell, because the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. (Rom. 1:18)

PRACTICING FORGIVENESS

How can we put this teaching about forgiveness into practice? First, you must experience it yourself. If you have never received God's forgiveness, I agree with the apostle in saying, "Now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). This is the gospel. Repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for all who trust in him. He will instantly pardon your infinite debt. Sin is the violation of the law of this great King, and it must be punished. Either Jesus Christ will deal with it, or you must bear it yourself. But our Lord Jesus Christ forgives your sin if you repent. He invites you to come and receive his mercy freely.

Second, practice forgiveness. If you are a Christian, always practice a spirit of forgiveness toward

all; this will happen if you value Christ's death on your behalf. As Paul told Timothy, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners- of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life." (1 Tim. 1:12-16) A truly forgiven person is always thinking about the cross of Jesus Christ, upon which God displayed his infinite love. We cannot understand the length or the width or the height or the depth of it. This love is absolutely incomprehensible!

What about those who have sinned against you? Forgive them when they say they repent, whether or not you feel they repented-you are under the order of the Lord of the church to forgive others. Let God deal with the person if he is not truly repenting.

What if you have sinned against someone? Go immediately to that person, repent and ask forgiveness in Christ's name; it will be granted. You may be old or young or a teenager; you may be highly educated or not educated at all; you may be poor or rich. Whatever our situation, we all stand on the basis of God's grace and mercy, and need forgiveness.

Where should we practice forgiveness? Practice forgiveness daily in the home. Husbands and wives must practice it. Parents and children must practice it. As families practice this, there will not be any divorce nor will children be destroyed. Forgiveness in the home will result in healthy families.

Practice forgiveness at the work place. Do not become bitter toward your employer and fellow workers. Do not keep score of the offenses of those around you.

Practice forgiveness in the church of Jesus Christ. In Ephesians 4:3, Paul says, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." If you are the offended party, go to that person who offended you and take care of the issue. If you offended someone else, go to that person and ask forgiveness. The church must maintain its unity and purity.

What about your enemies? You should practice forgiveness toward them, as well. Jesus said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." (Matt. 5:44) You will be amazed to see how your heart will be changed when you pray for your enemies and do good to them.

Finally, practice unlimited forgiveness. Take to heart these two verses: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Eph. 4:32) and "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." (Col. 3:13). When we practice these things, then the church of Jesus Christ will experience unity and purity, and our happiness shall be inexpressible.

THE JOY OF FORGIVENESS

As you read this, do you sense bitterness in your heart towards others? I caution you, such bitterness will affect your health and welfare. When our heart is rotten, our whole body suffers. When you forgive, you will experience the truth of this wonderful promise found in Isaiah 58:8: "Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness

will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard." Let me assure you, if you forgive from your heart, this will be your experience. And if you are a sinner who has never trusted in Christ, when you repent and receive the Lord's forgiveness, this will be your experience.

We discovered in Matthew 5:23-24 that we must forgive before we pray. If we will not forgive, our prayer will not be heard. Understand that God refuses to answer us on the basis of mercy when we refuse to deal with others on the basis of mercy. But when we forgive, what God promises in Isaiah 58:9 will be true for us. "Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I." Isn't that wonderful? God will answer your prayer. Then, as God declares in Isaiah 58:14, "you will find your joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob." There is tremendous joy in the Lord for those who live by these words of forgiveness, who remember what unlimited mercy has been poured out on us through Jesus Christ and who show the same mercy toward others. This joy is as abundant, as rich and as unlimited as the Lord's abundant forgiveness of us. It is my prayer that you would experience this forgiveness, practice this forgiveness and, in so doing, receive this joy.



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FORGIVENESS

Thayer's

863 aphiemi—1) to send away a) to bid going away or to depart; used of a husband divorcing his wife b) to send forth, to yield up, to expire c) to let go, to let alone, to let be

Col 1:12-14

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness ⁸⁶³ of sins:

1) to disregard 2) to leave, not to discuss now, (a topic); used of teachers, writers and speakers 3) to omit, to neglect

d) to let go, to give up a debt, to forgive, to remit e) to give up, to keep no longer

2) to permit, to allow, not to hinder, to give up a thing to a person 3) to leave, to go way from one

a) in order to go to another place b) to depart from anyone c) to depart from one and leave him to himself so that all mutual claims are abandoned

d) to desert wrongfully e) to go away leaving something behind f) to leave one by not taking him as a companion

g) to leave on dying, to leave behind one h) to leave so that what is left may remain, leave remaining i) to abandon, to leave destitute

6:12; (opheile), 18:32; (daneion), 18:27; the thought (dianoia) of the heart, Acts 8:22. Cf. kalupto, "to cover," 1 Peter 4:8; James 5:20; and epikalupto, "to cover over," Rom 4:7, representing the Hebrew words for "atonement."

4 Human "forgiveness" is to be strictly analogous to divine "forgiveness," e. g., Matt 6:12. If certain conditions are fulfilled, there is no limitation to Christ's law of "forgiveness," Matt 18:21,22. The conditions are repentance and confession, Matt 18:15-17; Luke 17:3.

5 As to limits to the possibility of divine "forgiveness," see Matt 12:32, 2 nd part (see BLASPHEMY) and 1 John 5:16 (see DEATH). See FORSAKE, LAY, Note (2) at end, LEAVE, LET, OMIT, PUT, No. 16, Note, REMIT, SEND, Note, (1), SUFFER, YIELD.

2. charizomai 5483, "to bestow a favor unconditionally," is used of the act of "forgiveness," whether divine, Eph 4:32; Col 2:13; 3:13; or human, Luke 7:42,43 (debt); 2 Cor 2:7,10; 12:13; Eph 4:32 (1 st mention). Paul uses this word frequently, but No. 1 only, in Rom 4:7, in this sense of the word. See DELIVER. Note: Apoluo, "to let loose from" (apo, "from," luo, "to loose"), "to release," is translated "forgive," "ye shall be forgiven," Luke 6:37, KJV (RV, "release," "ye shall be released"), the reference being to setting a person free as a quasi-judicial act. The verb does not mean "to forgive." See DISMISS, RELEASE.

VINE'S

B. Noun.

FORGIVE, FORGAVE, FORGIVENESS

A. Verbs.

1. aphiemi 863, primarily, "to send forth, send away" (apo, "from," hiemi, "to send"), denotes, besides its other meanings, "to remit or forgive" (a) debts, Matt 6:12; 18:27,32, these being completely cancelled; (b) sins, e. g., Matt 9:2,5,6; 12:31,32; Acts 8:22 ("the thought of thine heart"); Rom 4:7; James 5:15; 1 John 1:9; 2:12. In this latter respect the verb, like its corresponding noun (below), firstly signifies the remission of the punishment due to sinful conduct, the deliverance of the sinner from the penalty divinely, and therefore righteously, imposed; secondly, it involves the complete removal of the cause of offense; such remission is based upon the vicarious and propitiatory sacrifice of Christ.

2 In the OT atoning sacrifice and "forgiveness" are often associated, e. g., Lev 4:20,26. The verb is used in the NT with reference to trespasses (paraptoma), e. g., Matt 6:14,15; sins (hamartia), e. g., Luke 5:20; debts (see above) (opheilema), Matt

aphesis 859 denotes "a dismissal, release" (akin to A, No. 1); it is used of the remission of sins, and translated "forgiveness" in Mark 3:29; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14, and in the KJV of Acts 5:31; 13:38; 26:18, in each of which the RV has "remission." Eleven times it is followed by "of sins," and once by "of trespasses." It is never used of the remission of sins in the Sept., but is especially connected with the Year of Jubilee Lev 25:10, etc.. Cf. the RV of Luke 4:18, "release" (KJV, "liberty"). For the significance in connection with remission of sins and the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, see A, No. 1. See DELIVERANCE, LIBERTY, RELEASE, REMISSION. Cf. the different word pairesis, "a passing over, a remission," of sins committed under the old covenant, Rom 3:25. The RV should be used here. This passing over, or by, was neither forgetting nor "forgiving"; it was rather a suspension of the just penalty; cf. Acts 17:30, "the times of ignorance God overlooked," RV; see also, e. g., Ps 78:38.

WEBSTER'S

REMIT, v.t. [L. remitto, to send back; re and mitto, to send.] 1. To relax, as intensity; to make less tense or violent. So willingly doth God remit his ire.

STRONG'S

863 aphiemi (af-ee'-ay-mee); from 575 and hiemi (to send; an intens. form of eimi, to go); to send forth, in various applications (as follow):-cry, forgive, forsake, lay aside, leave, let (alone, be, go, have), omit, put (send) away, remit, suffer, yield up

2. To forgive; to surrender the right of punishing a crime; as, to remit punishment.
3. To pardon, as a fault or crime. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them. John 20.

4. To give up; to resign. In grievous and inhuman crimes, offenders should be remitted to their prince. 5. To refer; as a clause that remitted all to the bishop's discretion.

6. To send back. The pris'ner was remitted to the guard.

7. To transmit money, bills or other thing in payment for goods received. American merchants remit money, bills of exchange or some species of stock, in payment for British goods.

8. To restore. In this case, the law remits him to his ancient and more certain right.

DISMISS, v.t. [L.]

1. To send away; properly, to give leave of departure; to permit to depart; implying authority in a person to retain or keep. The town clerk dismissed the assembly.

2. To discard; to remove from office, service or employment. The king dismisses his ministers; the master dismisses his servant; and the employer, his workmen. Officers are dismissed from service, and students from college.

3. To send; to dispatch.

He dismissed ambassadors from Pekin to Tooshoo Loomboo. [Improper.]

4. To send or remove from a docket; to discontinue; as, to dismiss a bill in chancery.

DISMISS, n. Discharge; dismissal. [Not used.]

P'ARDON, v.t. [L. per and dono, to give; per having the sense of the English for in forgive, and re in L. remitto, properly to give back or away.] 1. To forgive; to remit; as an offense or crime. Guilt implies a being bound or subjected to censure, penalty or punishment. To pardon, is to give up this obligation, and release the offender. We apply the word to the crime or to the person. We pardon an offense, when we remove it from the offender and consider him as not guilty; we pardon the offender, when we release or absolve him from his liability to suffer punishment.

I pray thee, pardon my sin. 1 Sam.15.

2. To remit, as a penalty. I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it. 3. To excuse, as for a fault. 4. Pardon me, is a phrase used when one asks for excuse, or makes an apology, and it is often used in this sense, when a person means civilly to deny or contradict what another affirms.

P'ARDON, n. Forgiveness; the release of an offense or of the obligation of the offender to suffer a penalty, or to bear the displeasure of the offended party. We seek the pardon of sins, transgressions and offenses. 1. Remission of a penalty. An amnesty is a general pardon. 2. Forgiveness received.

FORGIVE, v.t. forgiv'. pret. forgave; pp. forgiven. [L. remitto. See Give.] 1. To pardon; to remit, as an offense or debt; to overlook an offense, and treat the offender as not guilty. The original and proper phrase is to forgive the offense, to send it away, to reject it, that is, not to impute it, put it to] the offender. But by an easy transition, we also use the phrase, to forgive the person offending. Forgive us our debts.

If we forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you. Matt. 6.

As savages never forget a favor, so they never forgive an injury. It is to be noted that pardon, like forgive, may be followed by the name or person, and by the offense; but remit can be followed by the offense only. We forgive or pardon the man, but we do not remit him. 2. To remit as a debt, fine or penalty.

FORGIV'EN, pp. Pardoned remitted. FORGIV'ENESS, n. forgiv'ness.

1. The act of forgiving; the pardon of an offender, by which he is considered and treated as not guilty. The forgiveness of enemies is a christian duty. 2. The pardon or remission of an offense or crime; as the forgiveness of sin or of injuries. 3. Disposition to pardon; willingness to forgive. And mild forgiveness intercede to stop the coming blow. 4. Remission of a debt, fine or penalty.

FORGIVER, n. One who pardons or remits.

FORGIVING, ppr. 1. Pardoning; remitting. 2. a. Disposed to forgive; inclined to overlook offenses; mild; merciful; compassionate; as a forgiving temper.

SCRIPTURES

Matt 6:9-15

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. 10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. 14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Rom 4:6-7

6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

1 John 1:9

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

Acts 8:20-22

20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

Luke 17:3-4

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

4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

Luke 23:33-34

33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

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