



# FEED MY SHEEP

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Issue #219

May 2017

## Father, forgive them not...?!

### *Forgiveness, part 2*

Previously, we saw that, biblically speaking; i.e., God speaking, there are at least four types of forgiveness: conditional, distant, partial and jubilee forgiveness. Three of the four fall short of the Father's will for our character. Only what we are calling *jubilee forgiveness* is wholly pleasing to God. We learned that Paul encouraged this kind of forgiveness by exhorting us to forgive as Christ forgave/forgives us. So exactly how did Christ forgive? In the Lord's prayer, we see that He tells us that in order to be forgiven by the Father, we ourselves must forgive those who "trespass" against us. A little further study showed that the words *debts*, *trespasses* and *sins* were from three different Greek words, but they all are referring to someone who offends or sins against us.

Let us proceed to the greatest sin in history, the murder of the Messiah. How did Jesus handle that offense in terms of forgiveness? This seems clear-cut to most Christians, but somewhere in your studies you might come across someone who advocates the following response by the Savior to His killers. I am setting this forth to spiritually immunize you against such a repugnant teaching. We begin at 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.**

In one of my Bible lectures, I quoted from an article wherein a man was trying to make a case that we as God's true Christian Israel people ought to hate the Edomites. I disagreed and showed how such action is counterproductive. It is a sad situation, because God

has written the Script for the bad guys just as He has written the Script for believers.

When believers have hatred within themselves and give vent to hatred towards the Edomites—as that writer encouraged—that is both sad *and foolish*, because it is exactly what the enemies of the gospel want. They are energy vampires. They thrive on and feed on negative emotional energy. So if they can stir up believers to hatred, even hatred of themselves, the Edomites, they love it. Thus hating Edomites plays right into their hands.

I make a point about that because with this verse about Jesus forgiving His enemies, we have a similar situation. I have heard in certain circles, perhaps not by this same writer, but by people who think like he does, people whose heart is darkened by hatred, who claim that this is a mistranslation. They contend that the correct translation is "Father, forgive them not, for they know what they are doing!" Can you really picture Jesus saying that?

For example, in my library, I have a self-published book called *The Anointed Standard Translation*. It is one man's translation from the Greek. (Nothing particularly wrong with one man translating the whole Bible.) This particular gentleman totally disdains the King James Version and the *Textus Receptus* (a Latin phrase meaning the Received Text), upon which the KJV was based. This writer used various other Greek sources and came up with his own version. Very modestly and humbly he calls it *The Anointed Standard Translation*.

I do not know if he is still alive, but the author lived not too far from Asheville over in eastern Tennessee. I was told years ago by a person whose word I trust—a person who knew this man quite well—that the author of the AST has a sixth-grade education, and he has *no* formal training in Greek, but that he used Strong’s Concordance and Lexicon and a couple other Greek dictionaries to make his own translation.

Now I recognize that many decades ago, a man with a sixth grade education might have been more educated than most high school graduates today, and many became self-taught in various fields of endeavor—all to their credit. But there is something to be said for getting some formal training in a classical language like Greek.

In this man’s AST, he omits the part of this verse where Jesus prays the Father to forgive His murderers. He apparently doesn’t believe it should be in the Bible at all. But he does have something to say about it in a footnote. His footnote says that “The Textus Receptus adds here”—and then he quotes the Greek words for that forgiveness section of the verse—after which he writes “which would be translated *And Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’* Or, if the comma were placed after *ou* [the Greek word for *not*—JWB] instead of in front (remembering that the uncials had no punctuation), it could also be translated *And Jesus said ‘Father, forgive them not, for they know what they are doing.’* ”

Brothers and sisters, this is a prime example of how a little bit of knowledge can be dangerous! Don’t misunderstand me. I am thrilled that there are so many Bible helps books available to our people today so that we can all study the Bible more in depth. But at the same time, we must recognize that being armed with a Strong’s Concordance and a couple Greek dictionaries does not make one a Greek scholar.

I had about one semester of Greek in college (Catholic) seminary before I dropped out in 1967 and I don’t count that for anything. But I did study Greek seriously and continuously for three years in the early 90s, having been tutored one-on-one by a man who was a professor of classical languages. He knew Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Syriac and Aramaic. And he knew them very well.

I don’t claim to be a Greek scholar at all, and I confess that I am quite rusty now, but I do know that

this man’s statement and others who claim that this translation is correct are betraying their ignorance of Greek grammar and syntax. While it is true that there was no punctuation in the original Greek manuscripts (the “uncials” are manuscripts written in rounded letters in ALL CAPS), the fact is, you cannot simply move the comma in English and have an equally valid translation of that verse. They are exactly opposite in meaning and one has to be wrong.

Incidentally, I should make a point to say that in another case (Luke 23:43), moving the comma does provide the correct translation and that is where Jesus told the thief on the cross “Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” If we move the comma, it reads “Verily I say unto thee today, shalt thou be with me in paradise.” But notice the word “not” is not in *this* verse. And that is the difference between this case and the one we are dealing with.

In the Greek manuscript, the word order is “Father forgive them not for they know what they do.” And so you can see why he would make that statement. That is what it looks like when we put it in the same word order in English. (Father, forgive them not...) However, in Greek, the rule is that words like *not* or *never* always precede what they are negating. Let me give just one example from elsewhere in the New Testament. It is the same verse we quoted in last month’s FMS, Matthew 6:15.

As a segue into this example, allow me to air a pet peeve of mine, actually, a lamentation. I have discussed this privately with others who understand our Israelite heritage. We *lament* the fact that there are those who by their lack of scholarship (and lack of writing skills) are an embarrassment to all Christian-Israel or Anglo-Israel believers.

I have many volumes of the works of the British-Israel writers of a century ago and longer. Generally speaking, their theology was correct, but they were incorrect in some details of their understanding. Setting that aside, the point I am making here is that most of them were *scholars* of the first tier. They had classical educations. They knew Latin, Greek and Hebrew. They knew history. And above all, they knew how to write coherently, cohesively and logically. I place the late Dr. Howard Rand in that category as well.

However, with the advent and ubiquity of desktop

publishing and the internet—which I believe is a good thing overall—but yet it gives the ability for anyone to publish or go online and display his ignorance for all the world to see, and thereby bring discredit and embarrassment upon all of us who happen to share *some* beliefs in common with that individual. Obviously, by having made these statements, I have now set myself up to be criticized any time I make a mistake. That’s fine; please do. Now that I’ve got that off my chest, let’s look at...

**Matthew 6:15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**

You will notice that there are two negating words in that verse (*not* and *neither*). In English, the translators put the *not* after the verb, but they put the *neither* before the verb in the second clause. But in the word order in the Greek—and I have checked the Greek text to verify this—both negating words come before the verbs they are negating. That’s the rule in Greek. One can check any other English translation, and I will almost bet, you won’t find any which translate it “Father, forgive them not...” But once again, we see that it betrays an attitude of the heart, doesn’t it? An attitude of unforgiveness towards enemies. So what does Jesus command in that regard?

**Matthew 5:43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.**

Who was Jesus referring to when he said “Ye have heard that it hath been said?” Was that somewhere in the Old Testament law? No, you won’t find that in God’s law. Rather, it was the tradition of the Pharisees, the traditions of the elders. In other words, it was men’s addition to the word of God. Jesus was about to nullify that addition.

**44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;**

When Jesus said “Love your enemies,” I am aware that some in Christian Israel have also been taught that “Well...Jesus was not speaking about enemies like the Edomites and the Assyrians here. Jesus is referring here to your fellow Christian *brother* with

whom you have a dispute. *Those* are the ones we are supposed to love and bless and do good to, not those wicked *Edomites*.” Once again, I point out to you that such an interpretation betrays the heart attitude of the one who teaches it. It is simply not true, as the context proves, as we continue on...

**45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.**

The sun rises on the evil and the good. Who are the evil and the good here? Are you the good?...and your brother who offended you the evil? I don’t think so! It is clearly *not* referring to two categories of *believers* here. Observe: Who are “the just” and “the unjust?” The just are the justified, the righteous. The unjust are the unrighteous, those who have not been justified by faith. In other words, the unjust are the unbelievers. That is sufficient to prove our point, but let us continue.

**46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?**

**47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so?**

Jesus is clearly making a distinction here between brethren and others. Therefore, this again shows the absurdity of asserting that Jesus was not commanding us to love all our enemies. He certainly was. Back to Luke 23:34 once more. “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” Was Jesus serious and sincere in that prayer? Silly question, isn’t it? There was never a false word that crossed His lips. So if Jesus was praying for His enemies to be forgiven, whom did that include? Would that have included the Roman soldiers who drove the nails? Yes.

Would that have included the Israelites of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, Levi and any others that may have been *in the mob*?... who were led to cry out “crucify him, crucify him?” Would Jesus be praying for the Father to forgive them also? Yes.

Would His prayer for forgiveness have included the *enemies* of his Israel people, the Edomites, some of whom had intermarried among the Judahites generations before, and some of those Edomites may have

been among the chief instigators inciting the mob? Would Jesus have been asking his Father *to forgive them also*? Well, Jesus said, Father, forgive **them**... for they know not what they do.” Who are “them?”

I used to think that “them” referred only to the Romans soldiers because they were just following orders and they had no idea what they were really doing. But did *any* of those involved *really* know what they were doing?

One might be inclined to say yes, certainly the *leaders* knew what they were doing because they were jealous. Because if Jesus didn’t die, then the Romans might come and take away their high positions. Listen to this in the gospel of John.

**John 11:47 Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we for this man doeth many miracles.**

**48 If we let him thus alone, all *men* will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.**

In other words, the Jewish leaders probably knew that this was indeed the son of God, but they wanted to protect their jobs, their power, their positions, their wealth, and their status. But notice, that when Jesus says they didn’t know what they were doing, it does not necessarily mean they didn’t know *who He was*. They could have known that He was truly the son of God and still had no idea what they were really doing by killing Him. Do you see that? If not, consider this.

I now believe that *none* of them *really* knew what they were doing. This became more clear to me when some other verses get factored into the question. For example, look at 1 Corinthians 2. I expounded this years ago in my Sovereignty of God lecture series [and in my book, of course, *Sacred Secrets of the Sovereignty of God*] when I was expounding predestination vs. free will.

Paul is talking about God’s secret Plan which nobody knew, including Paul himself, until God revealed it to him. And remember Paul had been a Pharisee! Beginning in verse 7, Paul is telling how God predestinated the crucifixion and He certainly kept the Plan secret from all the participants, including the bad guys.

**1 Corinthians 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of**

**God in a mystery, *even the hidden wisdom*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:**

**8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.**

“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” None of the rulers really knew what they were doing. For further confirmation, let us go to Acts 4:27. Here we will see that Luke tells us *specifically* who the princes of this world were that were merely following the Plan that God had predestinated. And remember, Herod was an Idumean, an Edomite—or at least half-Edomite.

**Acts 4:27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,**

**28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.**

First, know that the meaning of the word “Gentiles” is always dependent upon the context, as amply demonstrated by the tract by Pastor Ewing which we have published on our website. In this verse, since the people of Israel are distinguished from the Gentiles, then the Gentiles are obviously non-Israelites in this verse. From this verse, it is now clear that when Jesus asked His Father to forgive *them*, that *them* included the Romans, the Israelites, the Edomites and all other non-Israelites who may have had a part. There is more coming on this particular subtopic of forgiveness—and much more on forgiveness in our personal relationships—but I am forced to truncate it here.

*(To be continued.)*

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***Sacred Secrets of the Sovereignty of God***

by Dr. James W. Bruggeman

352 pages, \$25 postpaid

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