

The Blessing of Forgiveness

Study 1: The Forgiveness of the Father

God's Character –
the Basis of Forgiveness

2023 Idyllwild Bible School

There is a handout

The dire need for forgiveness in the last days

- In these final dark days, when Scripture says all the evil of Noah's day and all the evil of Lot's day will be joined in a single generation – resulting in *an explosion of evil* – it is inevitable that ecclesial members will fall victim to Sin
- To think otherwise is to deny the prophecy and the reality of human nature living in an increasingly godless society
- It is critical we learn how to forgive one another and how to encourage sinners (our ecclesial family) to be reconciled to God and to each other

How we respond to these failings, as ecclesias, as individuals, as the sinner or as the one sinned against, will determine whether Sin will prevail when such circumstances arise, or God's principles

Questions surrounding forgiveness

1. When should I forgive my brother who sins against me?
At the time of the sin or after he has repented?
2. What are the righteous principles upon which God forgives us?
3. Why is God so forgiving toward us?
4. Why does God link His forgiveness of me with my forgiveness of those who sin against me?
5. What did Moses have to learn about forgiveness following the events of Ex 32 (golden calf)?
6. How are the Memorial Name, the character of God, His eternal Purpose, and forgiveness all connected?

Questions surrounding forgiveness

7. When did Jesus forgive those responsible for his crucifixion?
8. What was the focus of Solomon's prayer at the time of the Temple's dedication and how does this relate to Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9?
9. When did Joseph forgive his brethren for their grievous sins against him?
10. Is God's forgiveness of us the same as our forgiveness of each other?
11. What is the difference between *Godly* forgiveness and *human* forgiveness?

Questions surrounding forgiveness

12. Why has God made it so easy for me to be forgiven?
13. How does forgiving others lead me to righteousness and prevent me from being overcome by my own sin?
14. Did the 120,000 people in Nineveh meet God's righteous requirements for forgiveness, or was this an exceptional situation in which ignorant Gentiles were forgiven outside God's principles?
15. When did Stephen forgive those responsible for putting him to death?
16. Why doesn't God forgive the unforgiving?

Questions surrounding forgiveness

17. How is it that a saint who commits a grievous sin and repents can emerge forgiven and a stronger disciple?
18. What life saving lesson did Abigail teach David about forgiveness?
19. If I forgive a brother, does this mean the ecclesia should ignore his sin against me?
20. Are there some sins in others I should simply ignore? If so, what are they?

The wisdom of forgiveness

There is great wisdom to be gained in coming to know and understand forgiveness as God defines it and the righteous basis and principles upon which He forgives us

Forgiveness can save us from sin, not just because it *provides a covering for our sins*, but because if we will embrace the righteous basis and principles these will teach us to forsake the way of sin

The problem of Sin – Isa 59

- “In its simplest form, sin arises from man disregarding the two great commandments: either in ☐ disobeying God, or ☐ in man’s failure to do right to his fellow man” – J Carter
- **Isa 59:2** – sin separates us from God; sin interrupts the fellowship God desires to have with man
- **Isa 43:24** – our sins are a burden to God and weary Him
 - God provides the answer to the problem of sin in **v25**:
“I, even I, am he that **blotteth out thy transgressions** for **mine own sake,** and will not remember thy sins”

*When God forgives sin, the sin is gone!
And with the sin goes the separation*

Why does God forgive sins?

- ✓ He is a forgiving God; it's who He is!
- ✓ It's what He does; it's how He lives; it's what He lives for!
- ✓ It's what He delights in doing! It's what He is ready to do at any time! It's what He anticipates doing!
- ✓ He does **He lives to forgive!**
- ✓ *Forgiveness is part of His core character, His moral nature*

Micah 7:18 “Who is God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because *he delighteth in mercy.*”

Ps 86:5 “For thou, Lord, art good, and *ready to forgive;* and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.”

Moses learns of God's forgiving character – Ex 32-34

- God's glory revealed on the mountain was intended to impress upon Moses God's forgiving character
- The overriding behavior of God's merciful, gracious, longsuffering, lovingkindness and faithful character (34:5-6) is forgiveness (v7)
- God's purpose is to fill the earth with His glory; forgiveness is part of the means by which He achieves this, because to save us He must forgive us over & over & over again – & He does, to keep us going
- The spectacular vision Moses had of God in Ex 34 was precipitated by one of Israel's greatest sins (in ch32)
- Moses had a wrong understanding of forgiveness and appealed to God to forgive Israel on a wrong basis; Israel remained unforgiven
- God rejected Moses' request to exchange his eternal life for the nation's forgiveness
- Moses and Israel had to learn the right steps to take to be forgiven

The people remain unforgiven as Moses descends from Mt Sinai

- God “repented” (changed His mind) at Moses’ request (**Ex 32:14**), so the people will not be destroyed, but they remain unforgiven
- Moses twice asks God to forgive them because they had not yet been forgiven
 - 1st request – **32:30-32**. God’s response: He won’t blot Moses out of the book of life, just those who sinned (**v33-34**)
 - 2nd request – **34:8-9**. God forgives this 2nd time and declares all nations will witness His blessing upon Israel (**v10** – the word “terrible” [NKJ: awesome] means a good/positive thing)
- The great sin Israel committed in ch32 is not forgiven until ch34, when Moses ascends the mountain a second time

God rejected Moses' initial request for the nation to be forgiven (Ex 32:32)

- Moses was asking for forgiveness on the wrong basis
- He made an incredibly generous offer – to forfeit his eternal life in exchange for God forgiving the people
- It wasn't a righteous offer: it wouldn't be righteous for God to take one man's eternal life to cover the sins of others
- God only forgives sins based upon a sound/righteous basis
- Moses needed to learn about forgiveness & seeks instruction
- If the people are not forgiven at the end of ch32, but are forgiven in **34:10**, *the key to their forgiveness is to be found in the events of ch33*
- God tells Moses He (angel of His presence – **Isa 63:9**) would no longer accompany the people; all are greatly troubled

Ex 33 – National repentance

It's a different people in ch33 than in ch32

- The nation responds by repenting (a changed heart) and being converted (a changed walk) – Ex 33:4-6
- Moses moves the tabernacle outside the Camp to reflect God's displeasure with the nation
- Every time Moses went out to the tabernacle, the people rose up & stood by their own tent door till he was inside
- When the cloudy pillar then descended, they **worshipped!**
- Textual links draw attention to and contrast the events of ch32
 - same Heb word for “rose up” in 33:8,10 as in 32:6
 - same Heb word for “worship” in 33:10 as in 32:8
 - ch32: they rose up to play; ch33: rose up to worship God
- Their bowed heads & worship matches Moses' response (34:8)

Moses needed to learn about forgiveness

- He asks God to teach him about forgiveness, “*show me now*

- **God’s forgiveness is restricted to those who fear Him**

Ps 103:13 further describes God’s loving and forgiving character – “*Like a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.*”

The warning of v11,13,17: God doesn’t forgive all people, ONLY those who “fear” Him (i.e. who respect and reverence Him above all else in their life; the same fear Christ had – Heb 5:7)

God expects us to reflect His character, to live as He does – which means we are to put an immeasurable gulf between sins committed against us and the sinner

The Blessing of Forgiveness

Study 2: The Righteous Requirements for Sinful Man

Class 1 review: The Father's forgiveness

1. There is a special need for forgiveness in the last days, given the prophesied decline in morals; we need to learn how to forgive one another & recover those overcome by sin
2. God forgives **because of His character** – it's the dominant behaviour of being gracious, merciful, longsuffering, abounding in lovingkindness & truth (faithfulness)
 - He is **ready** to forgive (Ps 86:5)
 - **He delights** in forgiving (Mic 7:18)
 - He **lives** to forgive
3. He doesn't forgive *reluctantly* or *begrudgingly*; **He wants us to be drawn to Him** when we've been overcome by sin
4. He forgives us, not just to "wipe our slate clean", but to teach us to **forsake the way of sin** & **lead us back to righteousness**

Class 1 review: The Father's forgiveness

5. Moses had a wrong understanding of forgiveness and sought to be taught by God, revealing the need *for all saints to be educated in the principles of forgiveness*
6. It was a different and repentant Israel in Ex 33, than the people who worshipped the golden calf in Ex 32, resulting in God forgiving them on the basis of His forgiving character and their genuine repentance
7. David echoes the link between God's character and forgiveness and uses the imagery of the infinity of space, distance & time to show His great mercy & *the immeasurable gulf* placed between the sinner & his forgiven sins – the guilt arising from the sins is gone! (Ps 103)
8. We need to learn to *forgive one another in the same way* – to completely remove the guilt as God does for our sins

Ps 86 – God’s character linked to forgiveness

An echo of Ps 103:11,13,17 – ***not all are forgiven***

God’s forgiveness is only extended to those who:

- ✓ have **a humble spirit** (86:1)
- ✓ **live by the standard of holiness** (v2)
- ✓ **cry daily for God’s help** (v3)
- ✓ **lift up (devote) their soul to God** (v4)
- ✓ **seek to be taught by Him so they can walk in His ways** (v11)

There’s a link between God’s forgiveness and the character of the forgiven

This is God’s wisdom: His willingness to forgive our sins *is intended to **encourage us to be better disciples***

- God wants us to view Him as **the One to turn to** when Sin has occurred in our life, and not be fearful of approaching Him

God's character & willingness to forgive & His future Purpose are all linked together – Num 14

Why does God cite His Eternal Purpose at Israel's rebellion?

Hopefully we are beginning to see that God forgives sinners not just to wipe out their sins but **to be able to include them in His Purpose** to fill the earth with people who reflect His character and glory

To transform them He must **continually** recover them from sin in order to **lead them back to righteousness**

This is why He is ready and willing to forgive and delights to do so, ***provided they approach Him on the right basis***

There is no covering, mercy or forgiveness for those heading in a different direction than God's Purpose

Forgiveness is linked not just with God's ① Character and
□ Eternal Purpose, but also with the □ Memorial Name

His Character – Exod 34:6-7; His Purpose – Num 14:17-20

His Memorial Name:

Ps 25:11 For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity;
for it is great.

Ps 79:9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.

Isa 43:25 I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions
for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

I Jn 2:12 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

God forgives us consistent with...

His Character (moral glory): Mercy, Grace, Longsuffering, Lovingkindness and Truth

His Purpose: earth filled with saints who reflect His moral glory

His Memorial Name: I will be manifested in a host of mighty ones

- ✓ So long as a person aligns himself with God's Character, Purpose and Name, and devotes himself to being part of these, God will forgive him
- ✓ God realizes we are weak and erring creatures, given to repeated failure, and that His forgiveness is needed to sustain us (keep us going), due to our many sins during our probation
- ✓ For this reason He is ready and willing to forgive and delights in doing so, consistent with His Character, to achieve His Eternal Purpose and to include us in His Name, knowing He cannot transform us without an abundance of forgiveness

Forgive one another in light of the Character, Purpose and Memorial Name of God

If I can learn to grasp the 2nd level

When my brother sins against me I will forgive him, in keeping with God's character, for the sake of His Eternal Purpose & Memorial Name;

to encourage my erring brother to persevere and not lose heart and not give up

When we learn to forgive one another on this basis, we are learning to forgive

for the same reason God forgives us

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- should I not turn round and be just as forgiving toward my brother, to help God successfully transform his character?

The Prodigal son – Lk 15

Proof of God's readiness to forgive

- The joy of the father in receiving his wayward son who repented reflects God's joy when we repent

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The son's focus is on the sin

The Father's focus is NOT on the sin,

it's on the repentance and return
(the son's changed *heart and walk*)

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- The son's repentance and return is the intended ***outcome, purpose and wisdom*** of forgiveness
- The prodigal son returns home having: ① turned from his sin; ② set his heart to do what is right; and. by faith, ③ entrust himself to his loving and forgiving father

The Righteous Requirements for Forgiveness

- ✓ Forgiveness is not all one-sided, with God doing all the forgiving & sinful man doing all the receiving
- ✓ While God is loving & merciful & “ready to forgive” there are **specific conditions (*righteous requirements*)** a saint must conform to & fulfill to receive the blessing of forgiveness
- ✓ When the requirements are obeyed, the sinner declares God to be right about the evil of sin & the need to forsake it – sin is exposed as the great enemy of righteousness
- ✓ God is honoured & can extend forgiveness ***without compromising*** any of His righteous principles or character
- ✓ If those requirements are missing, ***there is no righteous basis upon which God can forgive*** – the sinner remains ***unforgiven***

The Righteous Requirements for Forgiveness

Forgiveness of sins through Christ
was the great worldwide blessing promised to Abraham

Acts 3:25-26 (cp with Gen 12:3; 22:18)

Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one from his iniquities.

“turning away” is **the moral impact** of forgiveness, to **turn us from sin & back to righteousness**, not just to cleanse

*If we only see the cleansing of forgiveness without the turning from sin, we **miss** God’s purpose in forgiving us*

The righteous requirements were also applicable in the Old Testament

God's mercy does not flow automatically

Absent the righteous requirements a sinner remains unforgiven

- ✓ It would not be righteous of God to forgive the wicked who do not forsake their way or their evil thoughts – it would only guarantee their perpetual sin
- ✓ The righteous requirements are intended to encourage a sinner unto holiness – the moral power for good God's grace and forgiveness are intended to produce in us

man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon

The righteous requirements in Ezek 18

God was ready & willing to forgive all their sins provided they upheld His righteous requirements

21 But if the wicked will **turn** from all his sins that he hath committed, and **keep** all my statutes, and **do** that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

22 **All** his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him (*God would forgive them ALL!*): in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.

Even at that late date, despite all their sins & the Babylonians 'knocking' at Jerusalem's door,

God was ready to forgive!

the LORD GOD: wherefore **turn yourselves,** and live ye.

Forgiveness is simple & exactly what's needed

- The sinner is humbled, his conscience cleansed, sin is repudiated and God's righteous ways are exalted – it is **the perfect divine solution to sin**

The Catholic Church has done a terrible disservice to God's blessing of forgiveness

- The guilt associated with sin is used to profit financially
 - Sinners are left with the mistaken view that forgiveness can only be obtained through the Church
 - Sin isn't removed by their unbiblical inventions; but by faith in conforming to God's righteous requirements
- As soon as you set a price tag or some type of work or penance or ritual on forgiveness, **you rob God of His glory** and *pervert the righteous basis* upon which He forgives

The ease & simplicity of obtaining forgiveness is intended to encourage us to confess all sin

God knows He can't save us if we won't confess our sins

The wisdom of God in requiring our DAILY confession

- By continually confessing our sins, we never cease to recognize it as our enemy to relentlessly battle & overcome
- If we ever stopped confessing, the battle would end & sin would inevitably gain dominance over our life
- There is a special need for believers living in the last days to continue to hold ourselves accountable, via self-examination, to live by the standard of holiness
- We won't end up sinless, but we will end up faultless, for our sins will have been exposed and forgiven

but for us to make the needed corrections in our life

The Blessing of Forgiveness

Study 3: The Forgiveness of the Son

Review of Class 2

1. David understood the link between God's character and His forgiveness & pleaded for God's help on this basis (Ps 86)
– parents: *we need to model God's loving and forgiven character for our children*
2. God doesn't forgive everyone, only those who fear Him with Godly (not human) fear: i.e. esteem Him above all else in their life – Ps 86; who
 - ① *possess a humble spirit – v1*
 - *a commitment to holiness – v3*
 - *cry daily for His help – v4*
 - ④ *lift up their soul (i.e. give their whole being) to Him – v11*
 - ⑤ *seek to be taught by Him so they can **walk in His ways***
3. God's wisdom: His willingness to forgive us is intended to **encourage us to forsake the sin and be better disciples**

Review of Class 2

4. God forgives because of His Character (Ex 34), to achieve His Eternal Purpose (Num 14) of including forgiven saints in the Memorial Name (Ps 25)
5. To save us, God must transform our character, which takes time & repeated forgiveness, which He is delighted to do to keep us from giving up & being lost to Sin
6. When we learn to forgive one another **as a reflection of God's Character, Purpose & Name** – to encourage a bro/sis to continue in their walk and not give up – *we are learning to forgive for the same deeper reason God does*
7. The “guilty” (persistent rebels of Num 14) were not pardoned & will not be part of God's future Purpose or Memorial Name

Review of Class 2

8. It brings God great joy when a sinner repents (Prodigal son)
9. The promise to Abraham that his Seed would be “a blessing to all families of the earth” pertained to the forgiveness Christ makes available to those *who turn from sin* (Acts 3:25-26)
10. God has established righteous requirements a person must fulfill to be forgiven: □ confession, □ repentance, □ conversion; □ walk in the light, and □ forgive others
11. The ease & simplicity of our obtaining forgiveness is to encourage us to confess all sin; not to *hide* it, *blame others*, *dismiss* it or *excuse* it, but to take responsibility for it
12. Forgiveness is the perfect divine solution to sin: the sinner is humbled, his conscience cleansed, sin is repudiated & condemned, and God & His righteous ways are exalted

The ease & simplicity of obtaining forgiveness is intended to encourage us to confess all sin

- God knows He can't save us if we won't confess our sins
- Thanks to the sacrifice of Christ, God makes it very, very easy for us to be forgiven
- The worst thing we can do is to try to *hide/ignore* our sins, *dismiss* them as inconsequential, or *blame others* for them
- **1 Cor 11:27-30** – Paul's focus is on our self-examination; strong words for our failure: *unworthy, guilty & damnation*; the outcome: **spiritual weakness, sickness, even death**
 - Why such a stern warning? Because sin left unexposed, unconfessed & unrepudiated remains unforgiven
 - God uses our self-examination to help save us
 - The purpose of self-examination is not just to forgive sins but *for us to make the needed corrections in our life*

The danger of our presuming upon God's forgiveness – Isa 1:10-15

Our sins are striking – as bright scarlet to God

- ✓ One can't hide a scarlet stain on a pure white cloth, just as we cant hide our sins before God
- ✓ But they can be forgiven and become white as snow/wool
- ✓ **The red becomes white!** But only if we fulfill His righteous requirements
- ✓ At the Memorial Table we can end up like Israel if we are not careful & wrongly conclude participation in a few words of prayer, taking a little bread & a sip of wine is sufficient
- ✓ It's not participation in a ritual that brings forgiveness, the ritual is intended to remind us of the righteous requirements

The Righteous Requirements for Forgiveness

God will not compromise His righteous principles

All 5 are necessary – 4 out of 5 are **not** sufficient

God won't forgive all sin, or extend His grace to all sinners, **only to those** who conform to His righteous requirements

Notice: God's grace is not extended independent of a sinner's response to his/her sin

- Similarly, how would it be right for God to forgive a sinner who refuses to forgive others?
 - How could God hope to **develop His character** (of mercy, grace, longsuffering, lovingkindness & faithfulness) in a person who **refuses to forgive others?**

A need to be clear regarding how our obedience relates to forgiveness

- We cannot earn forgiveness, nor will our obedience earn us the right to be forgiven
- We must obey the 5 righteous requirements – we need to fulfill them, but we should not conclude that *because* we do, we are thereby forgiven
- We are forgiven because God is merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in lovingkindness and faithfulness; and because of the sacrifice of His Son
- We don't deserve to be forgiven, nor is there anything we can do to warrant forgiveness, but this doesn't mean being forgiven is unconnected to how we respond to our sin
- “we are justified freely by His grace...through Christ we have access to it...when we have done all, we have only obtained access to a favour” (bro Roberts)

The Repentance of Nineveh – Jonah 3

Showing why God forgives, His righteous basis & His wisdom

The Righteous requirements for forgiveness:

Nineveh shows the wisdom/moral power of forgiveness

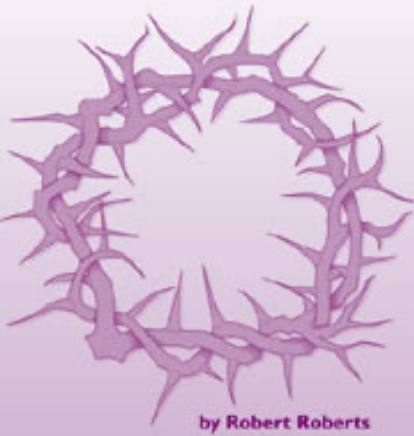
God forgives, not just to wipe our slate clean, but to turn us away from Sin, to encourage us to redirect our lives away from Sin and back to righteousness

This is the saving power of forgiveness: **it's not just a giant eraser**, it's intended to change how we live!

The men of Nineveh **validate** why God forgives & what He seeks to achieve in forgiving us – our changed life!

Matt 12:41 – Nineveh's repentance was genuine

The
Blood of Christ



by Robert Roberts

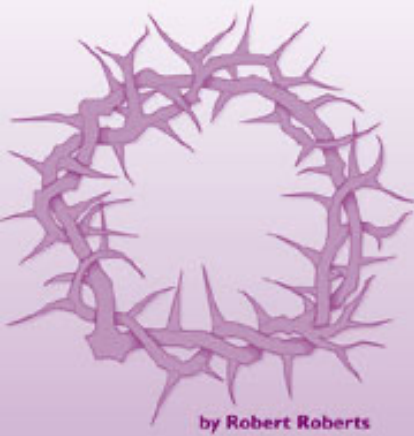
THE overarching requirement: we must be in Christ

The Blood of Christ (bro Roberts)

“God does not offer forgiveness indiscriminately; He does not say He will

forgive the sins of the world, whether they take notice of Him or not. Very far from this: **He restricts forgiveness to those who fear Him and submit to the conditions He has provided.** The question is, What are those conditions? There are various conditions, but we look not now at subsidiary conditions, but at the one that comes before all others, as brought forward by Paul in the declaration before us—the propitiatory setting forth of Christ as an object of faith in the shedding of his blood.”
(Rom 3:25)

The
Blood of Christ



The Blood of Christ – Bro. Roberts

“Why is the death of Christ a sufficient foundation for the forgiveness of sin unto life eternal, when the death of animals was not

so? ...the death of Christ was **“to declare the righteousness of God”** (Rom 3:25) as the ground of the exercise of His forbearance. That is to say, **God maintains His own righteousness** and His own supremacy while forgiving us; and exacts **the recognition of them** (*His righteousness & supremacy*) and **submission to them**, as the condition of the exercise of His forbearance in the remission of our sins.”

Where we all begin as a result of Adam's Sin: *God uses a prison metaphor to describe our captivity to Sin*

Isa 42:6-7

6 I the LORD have called thee (*the Messiah*) in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; 7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

Christ unlocked the door for himself/us – Ps 68:18; Eph 4:8

Isa 61:1

1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me (*the Messiah*); because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

The Blood of Christ – Bro. Roberts

Substitution robs God of His forgiving character

- It doesn't teach God forgives, but that Christ paid a debt owed to God that we can't pay
 - *God took all our sins and placed them on Christ, creating an enormous debt, which Christ then paid with his life*
- A debt cannot be both paid and forgiven (if a debt is paid to a store owner, you wouldn't say he graciously forgave it because he didn't – he received payment)
- God isn't a debt collector, He's a forgiver! Forgiveness is not the result of a payment, but His mercy, kindness and love

When someone sins against us we shouldn't look to exact a price before we forgive them; if we do, we practice debt repayment, not forgiveness

The alternative to forgiveness could destroy us

- An “evil spirit” is unleashed when a person sins against another, it disrupts relationships, creates ill will, hard feelings, grudges, hatred
- If we forgive immediately, *we empty the situation of such evil* and we “*cover a multitude of sins*” (1 Pet 4:8)
- Forgiveness takes our mind off ourself (and how we have been wronged) and *redirects our thoughts to God*
- Apologies are scriptural and helpful but should not be made a prerequisite for me to forgive my brother
- Jesus held no grudge as he hangs on the cross; there’s no ill will, hard feelings, hatred, even though great evil was done against him
- *Immediate forgiveness eliminates such sinful feelings from growing*
- This is how the love of Christ responds to those who sin against us, it becomes a power in our life greater than the power of Sin

The Blessing of Forgiveness

Study 4: Forgive One Another From the Heart

Review of Class 3

1. The ease and simplicity of forgiveness is designed to encourage us to confess all sin; the worst thing we can do is to try to hide, deny, dismiss or blame others for our sins
2. Self examination is a critical piece in how God saves us; but only we can do it; God uses a ritual (bread/wine) to remind us of the righteous basis upon which He forgives and the righteous requirements we must honour to be forgiven
 - Those who fail to properly examine themselves at the Memorial Table are *“guilty, unworthy and condemned”* and are called *spiritually weak, sick or dead* (1 Cor 11)
3. *It is not participation in rituals that brings forgiveness*; God rejected Israel’s pleas for cleansing despite their many sacrifices, oblations, assemblies & prayers; *they needed to confess, repent and be converted/change their life* (Isa 1)

Review of Class 3

4. God will not compromise His righteous principles; He will not forgive all sin & all sinners, only those who conform to His righteous requirements; (all 5 are needed, 4 of 5 is not sufficient)
5. Grace is not extended independent of a sinner's response to his/her sin
6. When a sinner fulfills the 5 righteous requirements, he/she doesn't earn forgiveness, but "obtains access to God's favour" (RRoberts)
7. The people of Nineveh conformed to/fulfilled God's righteous requirements as the result of Jonah's preaching – *they didn't accidentally get it right*

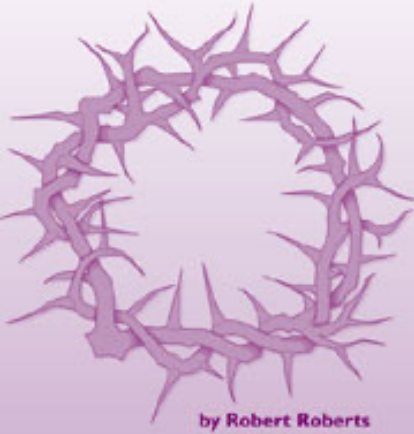
Review of Class 3

8. God's forgiveness of Nineveh shows it's wisdom and moral power: not just to erase our sins but to change how we live
9. THE righteous requirement for forgiveness is uniting ourselves (through baptism) with the sinless offering of our Lord; taking on his name, life, love, teachings, forgiveness – his everything & giving up our own life
10. *Substitution doesn't teach forgiveness, rather debt repayment, and undermines the loving and forgiving character of God; likewise: we need to forgive one another, not seek some form of debt repayment (Eph 4:32)*

Review of Class 3

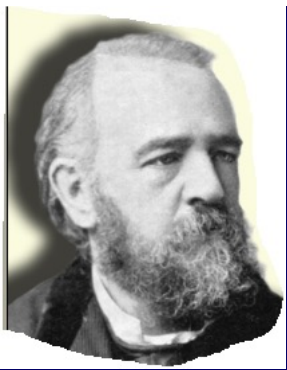
11. Jesus, while suffering on the cross, held no grudges/ill-will but forgave those who put him to death, despite the *agony* they caused him; as their sin was occurring against him; it was his final victory in his final trial (the crucifixion) over Sin
- His actions set the standard for our conduct, to forgive immediately any who sin against us, regardless of their sin
 - If he could forgive those who put him to death, there isn't any situation in my life in which I can justify failing to forgive anyone who has done anything against me
 - I dare not try to invent an alternate course (from our Lord) that would justify withholding my forgiveness
12. Christ's forgiveness on the cross shows the power of his love, to become a power in our life greater than the power of Sin

The
Blood of Christ



The Blood of Christ – Bro. Roberts

“If you will recognise your position, repent, and come under that man’s (Christ’s) wing, I will receive you back to favor and forgive you. My righteousness has been declared in him; I have crowned him with everlasting days; because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity, and was obedient unto death, I have crowned him with life eternal. It is in him for you if you will submit and believe in him and put on his name, which is a confession that you have no name of your own that will stand. Obey his commandments, and I will receive you and forgive you for his sake and ye shall be my sons and daughters.”



Jesus' response from the cross

“Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:” 1 Pet 2:23

“Christ was a man of sorrow through the oppositions of evil men: but as for his attitude to them, he prayed for them:

“Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Righteous men suffer at the hands of evil men, but they have none of the vindictive feelings that evil men bear to one another. They do not nurse anger. They do not plot revenge. They are ready even to do them a good turn if they can get the opportunity. They leave them entirely in God's hands.”

R. Roberts, The Christadelphian – 1897

The wisdom & power of Jesus' forgiveness

Matt 5:44 *“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”*

- ✓ Forgiveness will change our heart toward our enemies or our brother who sins against us
- ✓ It removes the natural resentment and makes it possible to obey Matt 5:44
- ✓ It is not possible to love, bless, do good and pray for someone against whom you hold a grudge or harbour ill will
- ✓ V45 – when we learn such forgiveness, we can be called our Father's children because we act like He does
- ✓ Jesus immediately forgives Judas upon being betrayed, calling him “friend”, and loving his enemy (Mt 26:50)

Jesus not alone in forgiving immediately

Stephen: as the stones fly toward him, in the midst of agony, while the Jews are sinning against him – Acts 7:60

“And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”

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Neither Christ, Stephen or Paul waited for the sinners to *repent* or *apologize* before forgiving them

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Paul:

□ when all had deserted him – 2 Tim 4:16-17

At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me...”

It is never wrong to forgive a person who sins against me

Jesus not alone in forgiving immediately

Paul – Acts 21

- The identical response of Jesus, Stephen and Paul in forgiving ***immediately***, is *not a coincidence*
- *Learning the spiritual skill of forgiving a person immediately will change your life, your marriage, your family life and your ecclesial life –*
- *it is a key part in our transformation*
- So long as we refuse to forgive a person, **God can't use us** to assist that person in their spiritual recovery & development

Clarification Points

Forgiveness and abuse:

Immediate forgiveness of personal offenses should not be seen as an excuse for, or to justify abuse of any kind

The solution to an abusive situation is not repeated forgiveness

Our studies focus on the 99% of sins committed that exclude abusive situations; there are other principles that must be brought to bear in abusive situations
(eg. Mt 10:23; 1 Pet 5:8; David fleeing Saul's abuse, etc)

to be forgiven by God, but should not be viewed as preconditions for forgiving those who sin against us; we don't have the ability to know the true status of *any* of the 5 in the person's heart/walk

What Joseph teaches us about forgiveness

Make Gen 50:20 personal!

Our God is greater and more powerful than any evil others may do to us; He uses the evil to save us and those impacted by it, provided we remain faithful;
forgive others by faith (not by time), no matter how treacherous their evil has been; we must not let pride or a lack of faith prevent us from forgiving

Joseph embraced this principle and it saved his family

Our Lord embraced this principle and it saved the race

- ✓ We can't be helpful to those we haven't forgiven because our focus remains *on our hurt*, not on their needs

Joseph teaches us about the power of forgiveness

- ✓ After Jacob's death, the brethren finally apologize through a messenger (50:17); they must have been close by as they quickly enter when they see Joseph in tears
- ✓ Picture the scene! They fall before him and declare themselves to be his servants (v18); fulfilling ch37 dreams
- ✓ As Genesis concludes the family is at its spiritual zenith; 12 godly men with an acknowledged leader the 11 looked up to
- ✓ This outcome was only achieved as a result of *Joseph being willing to forgive their evil and vile mistreatment of him*

Such is the power of forgiveness:

to heal and to save,

and to cover a multitude of sins,

and to restore broken relationships,

so brethren can once more be spiritually helpful to each other!

Faith is the key to immediate forgiveness

I trust that God will use the evil done against me to work out great good for all whose heart is genuine

If I can believe that,
then I can learn to forgive by faith

But if I remain preoccupied
with the wrong done to me,
then it is PRIDE, not faith,
that prevails in my heart

*It's not a case of "forgive and forget"; rather
"forgive and move forward by faith"*

Abigail: the wisdom of Godly forgiveness *contrasted with the danger of not forgiving*

Abigail's intervention saves David from sin & destruction

- ✓ She rightly recognized the situation called for forgiveness, not vengeance; you don't *slay* a sinner, you forgive him
- ✓ Her counsel to David is her counsel to us:
 - don't let your natural feelings dictate your response when you've been wronged
 - don't wait for Nabal's *repentance* or *apology*; men like Nabal don't do either
 - Forgive, let go of the sin, anger and evil it will cause you to do, *don't let the sins of others jeopardize your salvation*
- ✓ Nabal was about to cause David *to act just like Saul*, without even lifting a finger against David – *just a tongue*

Abigail's life saving counsel

Don't let a man like Nabal cost you your salvation

If you have feelings of anger toward a bro/sis who has **blatantly** sinned against you as Nabal did against David, at some point go back and read Abigail's counsel in vv26-31, only insert **yourself** in the place of David and listen as Abigail appeals to you...(paraphrased)

“God will certainly make ***you*** a part of His house, having been called by Him and because ***you*** are doing His work and have devoted ***yourself*** to righteousness and to refrain from doing evil; but now one has appeared in ***your*** life, whose foolish actions will cost ***you*** your eternal life if ***you*** respond in kind; **instead forgive and leave any vengeance to God**; when all is said and done, ***you*** will be glad ***you*** did not shed any blood over this matter”

The Blessing of Forgiveness

Study 5: The Power, Wisdom and Joy of Forgiveness

Review of Class 4

1. Christ, Stephen, Paul & David forgave **immediately**, *without waiting for apologies* or for *the sinner(s) to repent* –

this isn't a coincidence
it's a godly principle,
for us to follow

This is how the love of Christ responds to those who sin against us – it's becomes a power in our life *greater than the power of Sin*

2. While personal offenses should be forgiven immediately, **Do you see why I need to also forgive my brother who sins against me just as quickly...otherwise I end up treating/loving my enemy better than my brother** accountable to repent and walk in a new direction

3. The only way to fulfill Matt 5:44 (“*love your enemies, bless, do good and pray for them that curse, hate, persecute you*”) is to **forgive** those who sin against us **without requiring** their repentance or apology (*which may never happen*)

Review of Class 4

4. The alternative to immediate forgiveness is untenable as the “*evil spirit*” unleashed by sin (which disrupts relationships, creates ill will, even hatred) ***can destroy me spiritually***
5. Herein is God’s wisdom in commanding me to forgive others immediately: forgiveness **eliminates the evil spirit and prevents ME** from adding my own sin (*hatred, holding a grudge, seeking revenge, etc*) to the situation
6. Apologies are scriptural, helpful and appropriate, but **should not be made a prerequisite** for me to forgive my brother
7. It is **never wrong** to forgive a person who sins against me
8. So long as we refuse to forgive a person, **God can’t use us** to help that person in their spiritual recovery & development

Review of Class 4

9. Clarification point: God's forgiveness of us is different than our forgiveness of each other; God's forgiveness removes sins & cleanses hearts; our forgiveness of each other removes the ill will/"evil spirit" – we hold nothing against the sinner – but *the sinner must still repent before God*
10. Joseph's forgiveness of his brethren highlights the wisdom & power of Godly (*immediate*) forgiveness; it was exactly what the grievous situation needed to heal, save, cover a multitude of sins and restore broken relationships so brethren ***could once more be spiritually helpful to each other***
11. Faith is the key to our being able to forgive – we must believe our God is greater & more powerful than any evil others do to us; *He uses the evil to save us* *provided we remain faithful*; if I remain focused on my hurt, it is pride that rules my heart

Class 4: Forgive one another from the heart

11. We need to make Gen 50:20 personal (“*you thought evil against me, but God used it for good*”) and forgive any who have sinned against us, no matter how treacherous their evil
 - Joseph embraced this principle & thereby saved his *family*
 - the Lord embraced this principle & thereby saved *the race*
12. Nabal stands as a warning: don’t allow one who sins against us to cause us to then sin – *instead, forgive*
13. His railing accusation unleashed an evil spirit in David that had the power to spiritually destroy David – Nabal sinned with his words, nearly causing David to sin with his sword
14. Abigail taught David/us: forgiveness *empties the power of evil* from our life and preserves us on the path to salvation –
 - the situation called for *forgiveness* not *vengeance* – *you don’t slay a sinner, you forgive him*

The command to forgive one another

“But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses”

Forgiving others shows spiritual strength, not weakness

- Just as when we confess our sins & ask God for forgiveness, it's done out of spiritual strength, *not weakness*
- When we forgive, it shows the power of God's Word – which implores us to forgive – has taken hold in our life, and THAT power is greater than whatever ill feelings/hatred the flesh may hold against our brother
- It was not a weak Christ on the cross who forgave; his plea showed his spiritual strength
- Conversely, if I am unwilling to forgive, it reflects *spiritual weakness* and is of the *flesh*, not the *spirit*

Matt 18 – the unforgiving creditor

- A king takes account of the debts owed him
- One servant owes 10,000 talents
 - 1 day's wage = 1 pence/denarii – Mt 20:2, about 20 cents
 - There are 6000 denarii in one talent or 20 years of wages
 - 10,000 talents = 200,000 years of wages: an *impossible* debt to repay, representing our debt to God for our sins
- The king orders him/his family to be sold to pay off his debt
- He pleads for mercy & receives it, but then refuses to grant mercy to one who owed him 100 pence (100 days' wages), "*taking him by the throat*" though he too pleaded for mercy
- The king learns of this & in anger restores the 10,000 talent debt, condemns the servant & delivers him to tormentors

The unforgiving creditor: human forgiveness – our natural approach to forgiveness

1. When we fail to forgive, the root cause is our lack of compassion “*shouldest not thou have had compassion...*”
2. We minimize the magnitude of our sins against God and maximize the sins of others against us – an upside down view; Jesus: get a right perspective on the gravity of our sins!
3. Naturally, we like to keep score of sins committed against us; this is futile because the score/weight of sin is all against us!
4. We have no difficulty justifying the need to hold others accountable for their sins against us, even to taking punitive action till they make restitution and mollify our hurt pride
5. Our natural bias is to insist upon repayment and restitution instead of extending forgiveness

Lessons from the unforgiving creditor

1. The parable is **primarily a warning** of our need to learn to **forgive others**; strong language (“*wicked servant, wroth, delivered to tormentors*”) underscores how seriously God views our failure to forgive – “*so likewise shall my heavenly Father do to you...*”
2. Our failure to forgive reinstates the guilt from our own past sins, leaving us in an unforgiveable state
3. How we forgive others is how God forgives us (v35, cp 2 Sam 22:26); **His mercy varies from person to person**, based on the mercy each one extends to others
4. Forgiveness should be unlimited is Jesus’ answer to Peter’s inquiry – 490 teaches the unlimited nature of forgiveness
5. Forgiveness **must be from the heart** – sincere and genuine; total and complete with no further inquiries

Ps 51 – a plea for renewal & cleansing

David highlights encouragement for all sinners (vv14-15)

- ✓ Here is a confessed murderer declaring he will sing aloud of God's righteousness, having been made righteous!
- ✓ By the wonderful blessing of forgiveness, men/women who respond faithfully to sin can be recovered & restored
- ✓ David was the perfect sinner to sing God's praises, not because of his *uprightness*, but because of *his terrible wickedness* for which he had repented & been forgiven
- ✓ God doesn't ignore, condone or pretend sin isn't there – He covers it, blots it out and takes it away
- ✓ If God can forgive a man who sinned like David, He can forgive ALL sinners, provided they respond as David did
- ✓ The encouragement of Ps 51 can be helpful to us when we sin or when helping recover those overcome by it

Ps 32 – a forgiven man shouts for joy

- ✓ Written later than Ps 51, it should be read with it; both describe the outcome of forgiveness; which leaves us **blessed/happy** (v1)
 - Forgiveness replaces the despair sin causes & **returns us to joy!**
- ✓ V1 begins with the outcome, “*blessed is he whose sin is forgiven*”
- ✓ Once forgiven, God doesn’t impute (count) iniquity against us (v2), instead He **counts us righteous!**
- ✓ Despite David’s *enormous sins*, Paul (Rom 4) places David right next to Abraham, based upon their mutual faith – one believed in **the promises**; the other, a great sinner believed in **forgiveness** – God made and calls them both righteous
- ✓ A terrible sinner, declared righteous by God, caused David to “**shout for joy**” (v11); *it’s where forgiveness is intended to leads us*

God's wisdom: under Christ's gospel, it should be **impossible** for 2 brethren to remain unreconciled
(due to a personal offence)

Matt 5:23-24 – Go and apologize for your offence

- 23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;
- 24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Christ places responsibility for both actions on **MY** shoulders!

Matt 6:14-15 – Forgive every offence

- 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.

Jesus forgave Peter before he sinned against him

Luke 22:31-34

- Jesus knew Peter would face a special challenge because of the pending betrayal – he would fail & deny his Lord, and then need to repent and be converted
- Jesus reveals he was already praying for Peter before the sin of denial occurred (v32)
- Jesus knew Peter's sin would leave him demoralized, discouraged and at risk of being lost – a sin of this magnitude jeopardizes our faith
- Jesus' focus isn't on his suffering, but on Peter's recovery
- When someone sins against us, our focus should be on their recovery, not our suffering; their failing faith – which jeopardizes their salvation – is the issue

In these last, dark Noah-like days, let us learn to forgive as our Lord did

- ✓ That we may be helpful to those overcome by Sin
- ✓ Let us learn to turn to faith, not to pride when sinned against
- ✓ May we believe, as Joseph did, that our God can take whatever evil others may do to us & use it to save us
- ✓ Let us willingly forgive others knowing the enormity of our sins against God far outweigh any sins against us
- ✓ Let us learn to forgive because it is a better way to live; it's a power that overcomes the evil unleashed when sin occurs
- ✓ Let us learn to forgive others because only then can we experience the joy of being forgiven ourselves
- ✓ Let us learn to forgive because it's God's loving & forgiving character He is developing in us – that delights in forgiving & lives to forgive, so that His Eternal Purpose can be achieved