

# Forgiveness v Rejection

## Intro

### I. The Definition

"Clearing the record of those who have wronged me without holding a grudge"

Dictionary definitions:

- To grant pardon without harboring resentment.
- To release from the liability for, or penalty entailed by, an offense.
- To pass over a mistake or fault without demanding punishment.
- To cease to feel resentment against an offender.

### II. The Command – Eph 4:31-32

#### A. Negative – Eph 4:31

(Eph 4:31 NIV) Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

#### B. Positive – Eph 4:32

(Eph 4:32 NIV) Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

### III. The Basis – Eph 1:7-8; Col 1:13-14

(Eph 1:7-8 NIV) In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace {8} that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

(Col 1:13-14 NIV) For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, {14} in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

#### Redemption

o Meaning—to deliver by paying a price.

- To buy in the market—we are viewed as slaves, sold under sin, and under the sentence of death, but subject to redemption by the payment of a ransom price.
- To buy out of the market—this is purchase and removal from further sale...indicates the finality of redemption.
- To loose or set free—used commonly to indicate release of a slave.

#### Through his blood

**The price for our forgiveness was extremely great – the blood of Christ, “through his blood.”**

The price paid for our redemption from bondage to sin was costly beyond measure...it was the very lifeblood of Christ himself, poured out in his death on the Cross.

What was foreshadowed in the OT system of sacrifices was realized at the Cross when the Son of God laid down his life in death and ransomed or redeemed us from sin.

**Since I have been forgiven so much through the blood of Christ, how can I refuse to forgive one who has sinned against me?**

### IV. The Attitude v the Action

#### A. The Attitude – Eph 4:31-32

We must have the attitude of forgiveness even if the offender does not repent or recognize his sin. If we don't have the attitude of forgiveness we will fall to the sins of bitterness and rejection.

## **B. The Action - Luke 17:3-4**

(Luke 17:3-4 NIV) So watch yourselves. "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and **if he repents, forgive him.** {4} If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."

### **1. The humble confrontation – Matt 18:15-35**

#### **a. The sequential steps: go, take, tell, treat – Matt 18:15-17**

(Mat 18:15-17 NIV) "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. {16} 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.' {17} 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.

The repentance and forgiveness is limited to only those affected. You don't share it in a testimony time in church.

#### **b. The prerequisite: forgiveness – Matt 18:21-22**

(Mat 18:21-22 NIV) Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" {22} Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

**"I can forgive, but I can't forget!"** That's true. Even God does not forget, but He chooses to forget. When God says He will not remember our sins, He means He will never remember them or use them against us – Ps 103:8-13

(Psa 103:8-13 NIV) The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. {9} He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; {10} he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. {11} For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; {12} as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. {13} As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;

**I can choose to forget.**

There is an old saying, "You can't prevent a bird from landing on your head, but you can prevent him from building a nest."

### **2. The genuine repentance - Characteristics of genuine repentance: Psalm 51**

#### **a. An open, complete admission - Ps 51:1-4**

(Psa 51:1-4 NIV) For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. {2} Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. {3} For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. {4} Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.

#### **b. A desire to make a total break with the sin - Ps 51:10**

(Psa 51:10 NIV) Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

**c. A broken and humble spirit - Ps 51:17**

(Psa 51:17 NIV) The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

**d. A willingness to claim God's forgiveness along with the consequences --  
Ps 51:11-12; 2 Sam 12:10-14, 24**

(Psa 51:11-12 NIV) Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. {12} Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

(2 Sam 12:10-14 NIV) Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.' {11} "This is what the LORD says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. {12} You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'" {13} Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. {14} But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, the son born to you will die."

(2 Sam 12:24 NIV) Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and lay with her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. The LORD loved him;

**You can only grant the action of forgiveness if the offender seeks forgiveness.** If the person is unrepentant and you say, "I forgive you all the sins you did to me." He will simply say, "What sins?" You can't grant the action of forgiveness unless the offender is genuinely repentant.

However, if you fail to grant the attitude of forgiveness, whether the persons seeks forgive or not, you will develop a root of bitterness that will destroy your life.

## V. The Stages of Forgiveness

Elizabeth Kubler Ross suggests five stages of forgiveness:

- A. Denial** -- "I don't need to forgive. It wasn't that big of a deal."
- B. Anger** -- "It's other people's fault." "It's God's fault."
- C. Conditions** -- Conditions which have to be fulfilled before I will forgive.
- D. Depression** -- "I blame myself for letting hurt destroy me."
- E. Acceptance** -- "I look forward to growth from the hurt."

### **Corrie Ten Boom: "With all my Heart!"**

"Fraulein, will you forgive me?" The former Nazi stood before her, hand outstretched, waiting hopefully. Corrie's blood froze. For the first time since her release, she stood face-to-face with an SS guard from Ravensbruck.

Corrie Ten Boom, born in Holland in 1892, had never married, but instead helped her aging father and sister, Betsie, in the family watch-making business. When the Nazis arrived in 1940, her family began helping and eventually hiding Jews. Betrayed and arrested in 1944, both her father and sister died during their imprisonment.

While in prison, Corrie and Betsie learned the power of forgiveness as a weapon against the mastery of hate. After the war, Corrie continued to spread the message of forgiveness and reconciliation, and her former tormentor approached her at one of these talks.

She writes, "It could not have been many seconds that he stood there, hand held out, but to me it seemed hours as I wrestled with the most difficult thing I had ever had to do... 'Jesus, help me!' I prayed...and...woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place...this jelling warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes. 'I forgive you, brother!' I cried. 'With all my heart!'"

## VI. The Corresponding Commands

### A. Be kind - Replace vengeance with kindness -- Eph 4:31-32

Greek = "*chrestos*" Used 7 times in the NT. = kindness

It is used of the character of God in **Luke 6:35; Romans 2:4 and I Peter 2:3.**

(Luke 6:35 NIV) But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.

(Rom 2:4 NIV) Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

(1 Pet 2:3 NIV) now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

#### **Illustration - Yale University President:**

A Yale University President some years ago gave this advice to a former president of Ohio State, "Always be kind to your A and B students. Someday one of them will return to your campus as a good professor. And also be kind to your C students. Someday one of them will return and build a two-million dollar science laboratory."

### B. Be compassionate (tenderhearted) - Replace vengeance with Sympathy - Eph 4:31-32

KJV = Tenderhearted Greek = *eusplangnos*

**Used only twice in the NT, here and in I Peter 3:8.**

(1 Pet 3:8 NIV) Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

#### **Illustration:**

A farmer was out plowing his field one spring morning. The spring thaw had just occurred and there were many muddy valleys in the field. Through one particularly wet place his tractor became stuck in the mud. The harder he tried, the deeper he became stuck. Finally, he walked over to his neighbor's to ask for help. The neighbor came over and looked at the situation. He shook his head, and then said, "It doesn't look good, but I tell you what. I'll give it a try pulling you out. But if we don't get it out, I'll come sit in the mud with ya!"

Although we may not all be farmers, we do experience getting "stuck in the mud" from time to time. And chances are we probably know someone who is stuck right now. Have you tried "mud-sitting" with a friend? It may be the best thing you can do!

The person who has hurt you deeply is stuck in the mud. The offense may be one of the greatest opportunities you will ever have to minister, if you don't miss it.

## VII. The Ways People Forgive

A. "I forgive you." -- but they don't mean it. They will actually treat you worse after you ask for forgiveness. Ill. George

B. **“I can’t forgive you.”** “You hurt me so much, I could never forgive you.”

C. **“I forgive you.” -- and mean it with true forgiveness.**

### VIII. The Correct Responses to the Ways People Forgive

A. **When people don’t mean it; respond in love.**

B. **When people say they can’t forgive; respond in humility.** “I realize I have hurt you so deeply that I don’t deserve to be forgiven, but if you could ever find it in your heart to forgive me, I wish you would.”

C. **When people meant it; respond with gratitude.**

**Application:** Forgiveness does not come easy. When you have genuine repentance, let God bring genuine forgiveness in the one you have offended. It takes time. Be patient. It will come.

Remember that although it may take a long time for people to forgive you, God instantly forgives.

### Conclusion – Forgive rather than get bitter, reject and take vengeance

#### III. Pastor who was a friend of George Washington:

In the days of the American Revolutionary War there lived at Ephrata, Pennsylvania, a Baptist pastor by the name of Peter Miller who enjoyed the friendship of General Washington. There also dwelt in that town one Michael Wittman, an evil-minded man who did all in his power to abuse and oppose this pastor. One day Michael Wittman was involved in treason and was arrested and sentenced to death. The old preacher started out on foot and walked the whole seventy miles to Philadelphia to plead for this man's life. He was admitted into Washington's presence and at once begged for the life of the traitor. Washington said, "No, Peter, I cannot grant you the life of your friend." The preacher exclaimed, "My friend, he is the bitterest enemy I have." Washington cried, "What? You've walked seventy miles to save the life of an enemy? That puts the matter in a different light. I will grant the pardon." And he did. And Peter Miller took Michael Wittman from the very shadow of death back to his own home in Ephrata -- no longer as an enemy, but as a friend. -- The Grace of Giving, by Stephen Olford

*“Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing”. 1 Peter 3:8-9*

### Assignment

List some of the benefits to you and your family living in biblical forgiveness

*(Possible answers: more healthy relationships, clear conscience, less personal stress, good modeling for children, able to be more vulnerable without fear, etc.).*

Spend a few minutes in personal reflection:

Ask God to search your heart to see if there is anyone you need to forgive. Go to God (and to the person involved) and deal with this sin. Ask a trusted friend to hold you accountable. Or...

If God doesn’t reveal a specific area of need (sin) to you, think of a situation in your life in which a lack of forgiveness (either by you or by someone else) damaged someone’s life (yours or someone else’s). Describe how this situation might have looked if forgiveness had been given.