
Forgiveness Part IV

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Forgiveness is Hard

Matthew 6: 5-15; 18:21-35

Isaiah tells us, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.’” (Isaiah 55:8-9, NIV)

True forgiveness is one of the hardest things to accomplish in the human experience, even for the mature Christian. Yet, this is our mandate, and call. Forgiveness is hard because it demands a surrender of our right to *get even*. Forgiveness even causes suffering for the person who was wronged, the victim. The suffering, from our human perspective and reasoning, should belong to the instigator of the wrong. It is natural to consider this unfair. And, yes, it is unfair; it was unfair for our Lord to go through what He did to forgive us!

Forgiveness is hard, also, because we can easily avoid it; we can walk the other way, and execute revenge. And, it would be considered justified in the eyes of our friends, our relatives, and, especially of society. We could even receive some kind of medal for coming up with a good scheme of revenge.

As a youth, I loved the comic book, ‘The Punisher,’ where the super hero was a victim of a severe crime, and his wife and kids were inadvertently killed by the mob. So, he makes it his life’s crusade to affect revenge on all criminals who evade the law. This is appealing; the criminals deserve the Punisher’s revenge, especially since the law is unable to deal with them because of bribes, cut backs, and apathy. This pleases our human nature. However, God does not want us to rely on our human nature, rather, to rely on Him.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways...” This passage is telling us that our way of thinking is wrong. If God is the Creator of all things, including truth, and He is all knowing, and He is all-powerful, then, His ways are better than ours. We may not be able to recognize this, because our perspective is limited, as is our knowledge and insight.

- God is governed by righteousness; whereas, desires and emotions drive us.
- God has a moral and virtuous purpose; our purpose is self-seeking.
- God’s primary purpose in our lives is to bring us out of our self-destructive and self-seeking nature, and into the reclamation of redemption in Him; this is the work of Christ.
- God’s thoughts are beyond our comprehension and imagination; therefore, we should rely on Him, and not on ourselves.
- These are spiritual debts; it is not necessarily referring to property or money transactions. Although, with discernment, it can be applied to all types of debts with forgiveness.

- The Jewish understanding of Sin was a debt to God that needed to be repaid through redemption and sacrifice.
- If you are not able or willing to forgive others, God will be able, but unwilling, to forgive you!
- We are to forgive others in response to the fact that we have been forgiven. However, the forgiveness we may give to others will never compare to the forgiveness Christ has given us!

To forgive, we have to realize that we are all sinners, we still have sin and we still do sin. Thus, we always need to not only be aware of it, but also repent from it and seek forgiveness. This is a must, daily act, not just when we think about it, or wait until we are convicted. We must be willing to seek forgiveness daily from God and others!

Questions

1. How has Christ cleared your debts with His forgiveness through His redemption and sacrifice?
2. When you have a debt to God that needed to be repaid, what can you do? How does this help you to forgive others?
3. If you are not able or willing to forgive others, why should God willing, to forgive you?
4. How can you better forgive others in response to the fact that you have been forgiven?
5. How can forgiveness help you to give to others? Keep in mind no matter what we give, we will never compare to the forgiveness Christ has given us!
6. Because God is governed by righteousness; what can you do with your misplaced desires and emotions? What can drive you better than your will?
7. Because God has a moral and virtuous purpose; my purpose will be? How can you get rid of your self-seeking mindset?
8. Because God's primary purpose in your life is to bring us out of your self-destructive and self-seeking nature, how can you seek reclamation and redemption in Him? How will this help you with forgiveness?
9. Because God's thoughts are beyond your comprehension and imagination; what can you do to rely on Him, and not on yourself?
10. What are some of your spiritual debts? How do these compare to the debts of property or money? How can the relief of your spiritual debts give you greater peace and happiness?