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## Forgiveness Part VI

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### Forgiveness is Costly

#### Psalm 32; Matthew 18:21-35

Luke tells us,

But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. (Luke 6:27-31, NIV)

When we forgive, it may incur a cost to us. We should realize, and even welcome, that cost. These go against our inclination and Will, but, remember, the *vengeance belongs to the Lord*. We are to never forget the cost our Lord paid on our behalf. No cost we could ever incur could compare with the cost He paid for us. When we forgive, we will be refocusing our plans for our pain into God's plan, and God's ways. So, our pain is relieved, and our life can go on—in a better direction!

We can live improved quality lives when we forgive. Our relationships can grow, and we can become more useful to others and, especially, to God. When we understand that it does involve cost, we can gain the right mindset for forgiveness. We will realize from Scripture not to base it on our feelings and desires, but to focus on what forgiveness really is. We can see it as what Christ gave us, as He was our example. John 3:16 is the example on what forgiveness cost our Lord. His undeserved, painful death and separation from the Father was a substitution for what we deserved. This was our Lord's suffering and cost. In comparison, the cost for us will be very minimal and limited, and we need to keep this in view, using it as our strength to get through it. Our cost is to live with the consequence of the evil that was brought on us. We then take the responsibility for the hurt brought on to us. Understanding this is hard, even for the mature Christian, and, virtually impossible for the non-Christian, since it goes against the common sense of society. In the eyes of the world, the suffering should be put upon the one who did the wrong. Yet, the Scriptural view is a beacon, a witness to the supremacy of Christ.

We could normally avoid this form of suffering, but we are called to face it. We need to accept the consequences of the wrong, such as a parent forgiving a child for breaking a priceless object. The parent bears the cost to either replace it, or suffer without it, and the child gets off free (well, with some sort of punishment). This is the cost of suffering. In the case of the man who lost his wife to murder, his suffering is that he cannot be with his wife anymore. Forgiveness chooses to suffer. It is very hard to make that voluntary choice to take on the suffering, even when we do not deserve it; yet, we must make it so as to grow in our walk with our Lord, and to grow toward our full potential.

Humanity owes a great deal to the Creator of the universe, and our willful disobedience to our Creator is a slap in His face. We owe a debt we could never conceive, or pay. Yet, most people live their lives as an insult to what Christ has done. And, Christ still pursues them with the ultimate love! Christ did not owe our debt, yet He paid it!

Christ was the substitute for our punishment, which we deserved; so is forgiveness. Forgiveness is a substitution too, since it requires a penalty to be paid, and, the victim pays that penalty. It is a faint reflection of what Christ has done for us! We may not understand the mystery behind this, but we can trust in our Lord, who will carry us through it. The relation between what Christ went through so that we could be forgiven, and the call for us to take on the responsibility for a sin we did not commit, will give us a deeper understanding into the character and nature of God. From this, we should mature to a deeper level, and be used in a greater way to further the cause of Christ. The result is that we take our response to evil and redirect it for good, and, even to a point, take the evil on ourselves. The result is that Satan is defeated and prevented from receiving a prize, his reward that he craved to gain, from our refusal to forgive. This is why the cost accepted by our Lord is the greatest cost of all. We need to realize this, and respond accordingly to one another.

Forgiveness is worth the agony we may go through, because, it will heal the wounds and relieve the pain. Perhaps a scar will remain. But, take it to heart, and recognize that scar as a badge of honor to help us grow and mature, to redirect our wrong path onto the *right direction*. Be the person who forgives. Do not be the person who refuses to!

### **Questions**

1. Do you believe that you can live a more improved quality lives when you forgive? How so, why not?
2. Do you believe that forgiveness is worth the agony we may go through? How so, why not?
3. How have you seen that when you forgive, it incurred a cost to you? How so? Was there anything you can have done better?
4. What need to take place in the lives of most Christians, perhaps you too, to be able to welcome, that cost?
5. How can forgiveness help you live a more improved quality of life?
6. How can forgiveness help your relationships grow, and become more useful to others and, especially, to God?
7. What can you do to understand what Christ has done for you so you can fully do your best to be faithful, even in times of pressure, waiting, and uncertainty?

8. What needs to take place in some people for them to have the desire to be rescued out of their distorted thinking that because we have grace we do not have to forgive?
9. Why must we all need to keep ourselves tuned into God constantly and continually, and allow Him to carry us through?
10. How can you better understand that forgiveness is worth the distress we may feel?

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