

Understanding Forgiveness

Defining Forgiveness

Psalm 103:2-3, 10-14

² Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: ³ Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases . . .

¹⁰ He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward 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 pities his children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him. ¹⁴ For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.

Defining Forgiveness

Initial forgiveness:

- Hear
- Believe
- Repent
- Confess
- Be baptized
- Be faithful until death

Subsequent forgiveness:

- Repent
- Pray

Defining Forgiveness

Acts 8:9-13

⁹ But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, ¹⁰ to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is the great power of God.” ¹¹ And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time.

¹² But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. ¹³ Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.

Defining Forgiveness

Acts 8:18-23

¹⁸ And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, ¹⁹ saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

²⁰ But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! ²¹ You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. ²² Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³ For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity."

Defining Forgiveness

Initial forgiveness:

- Hear
- Believe
- Repent
- Confess
- Be baptized
- Be faithful until death

Subsequent forgiveness:

- Repent
- Pray/Confess
- Be faithful until death

How God Forgives

I. Unlimited Forgiveness

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1 John 1:8-2:2

- The goal is to *not sin*
- The reality is *we're still going to*

General conditional If/Then statement:

IF we fulfill the condition (confessing our sins),
THEN He will hold to His Word and forgive and cleanse us

As long as we're willing to repent and confess our sins,
God is willing to forgive and cleanse us!

I. Unlimited Forgiveness

Matthew 18:21-22

²¹ Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” ²² Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”

Luke 17:3-4

³ “Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴ And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.”

If Jesus requires us to forgive this much and this often, will He not do the same for us?

How God Forgives

I. Unlimited Forgiveness

II. Immediate Forgiveness

II. Immediate Forgiveness

Luke 15:20-24

- Context: son has repented and begins to confess

The father:

- Meets him on the road
- Asks for no proof
- Doesn't hesitate
- Immediately restores him as his son

II. Immediate Forgiveness

Matthew 18:23-27

- Inescapable debt
 - 1 talent = 6,000 denarii = 16 years' wages
- Judgment rendered
 - All things to be taken
 - Man, wife, and children all to be enslaved
- Man asks for patience, receives forgiveness
- King's response
 - Not an extension on loan
 - Not a reduction of debt
 - Not a change in method of payment
 - **Immediate and total forgiveness**

II. Immediate Forgiveness

Luke 5:17-26

- Jesus shows He can heal physically to prove that He can forgive spiritually.
- The man *immediately* rose up and departed
 - No delayed healing
 - No "come back later"
 - Immediately restored to full functionality
- Sins forgiven the same way
 - Man immediately restored to a right relationship with God

How God Forgives

- I. Unlimited Forgiveness
- II. Immediate Forgiveness
- III. Permanent Forgiveness**

III. Permanent Forgiveness

Acts 3:19

¹⁹ Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord

"Blotted out"

1. "to anoint or wash in every part, hence to besmear"
2. "to wipe off, wipe away; to obliterate, erase, wipe out, blot out"

Used of painting or plastering in ancient texts

III. Permanent Forgiveness

"Ladders were made to match the height of the enemy's wall, which they measured by the layers of bricks, the side turned towards them not being thoroughly whitewashed."

- Thuc. 3.20

Photo: city wall of
Thessalonica

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III. Permanent Forgiveness

Acts 3:19

- Plaster "blots out" bricks in wall
- God is willing to "blot out" our sins

Revelation 21:4

⁴ "And God will **wipe away** every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

- Just as God will one day wipe away all our tears, God is willing to wipe away all our sins.

III. Permanent Forgiveness

Acts 22:16

¹⁶ 'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

- Physical washing permanently removes dirt
- Spiritual washing permanently removes sin

- Earthly consequences may remain, but God forgives and no longer holds that sin against us.

How God Forgives

- I. Unlimited Forgiveness
- II. Immediate Forgiveness
- III. Permanent Forgiveness
- IV. Conditional Forgiveness**

IV. Conditional Forgiveness

1 John 1:9

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- If we confess our sins and repent, God forgives
- If we *don't* confess and repent, God *doesn't* forgive!

God's forgiveness is conditional on our recognition of our sin and our turning away from it!

IV. Conditional Forgiveness

2 Peter 3:9

⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

- God is ready and willing to forgive everyone
- The limiting factor is our willingness to *repent*

"Even as Christ forgave you..."

Colossians 3:12-13

¹² Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

**Every word said about God's forgiveness of us
applies to our forgiveness of others!**

How We Forgive

I. **Unlimited Forgiveness**

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1 John 1:9

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- General conditional If/Then statement:
 - IF we fulfill the condition (confessing our sins), THEN He will hold to His Word and forgive and cleanse us
- Can *we* say we do the same?
- Do *we* forgive others if they confess and repent?

I. Unlimited Forgiveness

Luke 17:3-4

³ “Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴ And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.”

- This is our standard!
 - Even if wronged multiple times
 - Even if wronged right after forgiving
- God is willing to forgive as often as we have need – will we forgive others as often as we need forgiven?

How We Forgive

I. Unlimited Forgiveness

II. Immediate Forgiveness

II. Immediate Forgiveness

Luke 15:20-24

The father:

- Meets him on the road
 - Am I earnestly awaiting the opportunity to forgive?
- Asks for no proof
 - Am I willing to believe a claim of repentance?
- Doesn't hesitate
 - Do I make others wait to receive my forgiveness?
- Immediately restores him as his son
 - Do I keep others at a distance because they've wronged me?

II. Immediate Forgiveness

Matthew 18:28-35

- King's response to a 160,000 *year* debt
 - Immediate and total forgiveness
- Man's response to a 100 *day* debt
 - Immediate and total judgment
- God expects us to "pay it forward"

How We Forgive

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- II. Immediate Forgiveness
- III. Permanent Forgiveness**

III. Permanent Forgiveness

Acts 3:19

¹⁹ Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord

- God blots out our sins with the blood of Christ
- Do we:
 - Unnecessarily bring up others' past mistakes?
 - Remind others of their failings?
 - 'Un'-forgive after time passes?

God expects us to respect His forgiveness of others

How We Forgive

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- IV. Conditional Forgiveness**

IV. Conditional Forgiveness

Luke 17:3-4

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- Our forgiveness is conditional also!
 - Just as we must repent to receive God's forgiveness, we must repent to receive others' forgiveness
 - Just as God cannot forgive without repentance, we cannot forgive without repentance

IV. Conditional Forgiveness

Acts 7:59-60

⁵⁹ And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ⁶⁰ Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

- We still must be *willing* to forgive!
 - Even as they murdered him, Stephen was willing to forgive
- We should eagerly await the moment we can forgive
 - We should be grieved when we can't

"...so you also must do"

- We forgive others *so that* God forgives us.
- We forgive others *because* God forgives us.
- We forgive others *just as* God forgives us.

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Subsequent forgiveness:

- Repent/Confess
- Pray