

# FORGIVENESS OF OTHERS

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On one occasion during His ministry, the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. Divine inspiration must have prompted the question for the Holy Spirit was not yet given by which they could know the Father to whom Jesus prayed.

MATTHEW 6:9-13 “Therefore, you are to pray after this manner: ‘Our Father Who *is* in heaven, hallowed be Your name; 10 Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth, as *it is* in heaven; 11 Give us this day our daily bread; 12 And **forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors**; 13 And lead us not into temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.’ .”

Verse 12 is of particular importance. The record in Luke 11:4 is even more emphatic. It reads, “And forgive us our sins, **as we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us**; and lead us not into temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.” Afterward, Jesus explained to the disciples:

MATTHEW 6:14-15 “For **if you forgive** men their trespasses, **your heavenly Father will also forgive you**. 15 But **if you do not forgive** men their trespasses, **neither will your Father forgive your trespasses**.”

These are strong words. Jesus said that *salvation* is dependent upon forgiving those who have offended us because God will *not* forgive us if we refuse to grant others the same. Without God’s forgiveness, there is no eternal life. Jesus spoke at great length about forgiving others during His Sermon on the Mount and what He requires is undoubtedly most difficult to achieve:

LUKE 6:27-38 But I say to you who hear, **love [agapao] your enemies**, and do good to those who hate you. 28 Bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. 29 If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other *cheek* also; and if anyone takes your cloak, do not forbid your coat also. 30 Give to everyone who asks you; and if anyone takes what *is* yours, do not ask *for it* back. 31 And exactly as you would have men do to you, you do the same to them also. 32 But if you love *only* those who love you, what praise is it to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good *only* to those who are doing good to you, what praise is it to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 And if you lend *to those* from whom you hope to receive, what praise is it to you? For even sinners lend to sinners, that they may receive as much again. 35 **But love [agapao] your enemies**, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and **you shall be the children of the Highest**;

for He is good to the unthankful and *the* wicked. 36 Therefore, you also be compassionate, *even* as your Father is compassionate. 37 And do not judge *others*, so that you yourself will not be judged in any way. Do not condemn *others*, so that you will not be condemned in any way. **Forgive, and you shall be forgiven.** 38 Give, and it shall be given to you. Good measure, pressed down and shaken together and running over, shall they give into your bosom. **For with the same measure that you mete out, it shall be measured again to you.**

The two words forgive and forgiven in verse 37 come from the Greek word *apoluo* which means to free fully, release, dismiss, pardon, or figuratively let die. God's forgiveness is not partial; it is complete and without reservations. It means letting the offense "die". We, too, must learn to forgive **fully**. To understand what this means, notice the example of Jesus Christ:

LUKE 23:33-34 And when they came to the place called *Place of a Skull*, there they crucified Him and the malefactors, one on *the* right and one on *the* left. 34 Then Jesus said, "**Father, forgive them**, for they do not know what they are doing." And as they divided His garments, they cast lots.

Perhaps the most incredible act that Jesus did on earth is recorded here. He was betrayed and condemned following an illegal trial. Then, though innocent, He was humiliated and beaten so cruelly and mercilessly that He was unrecognizable (Isaiah 52:14). Thereafter He was murdered by crucifixion. As He was hanging upon the cross enduring an agony of torment that few have ever experienced (**none** were completely innocent like Jesus), He said, "Father, forgive them." To be capable of such mercy and grace through misery and suffering is astounding. Appealing for the lives of His tormentors at that moment truly **defines** our God.

Interestingly, the word forgive in Luke 23:34 is the Greek word *aphiemi* (also used in Matthew 6:12). It means *to send forth* in the sense of separating. Jesus asked His Father to separate or send forth the offenses from those who crucified Him. In forgiving, Jesus was giving us an example. He was asking God to remove this sin so it was no longer attributed to them:

PSALMS 103:12 "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He **removed** our transgressions from us."

Forgiveness is always a petition to God, asking Him to lay aside our sin because all sin is against God (Psalm 51:4). As in the case when asking God to forgive our own sins, forgiveness of another person must be sincere and the kind of forgiveness God requires is from the heart:

MATTHEW 18:34-35 "And in anger, his lord delivered him up to the tormentors, until he should pay all that he owed to him. 35 Likewise shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you **does not forgive his brother's offenses from the heart.**"

By forgiving those who crucified Him, Jesus knew that they didn't understand who He was and what His death meant for them. How easy it is for anger to be our response to an offense even if it was unintended. Not so with Jesus because He came to this earth to be the sacrifice for sin. This truly defines our God because **forgiveness is the measure of agape love in one's heart.** The *agape* love of God the Father and Jesus Christ is plainly evident in this verse because the suffering and sacrifice was determined *before* the creation of mankind, not after.

REVELATION 13:8 "And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the book of life of the **Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**"

The phrase "foundation of the world" literally means from the "founding of the cosmos (universe)". **Before** man was created, God established that Jesus Christ would endure terrible agony so that God could forgive the sins of mankind. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life." (John 3:16). God's *agape* love is so complete that Jesus Christ was predestined to die for us even before man was given the breath of life.

Everything God has done proves His love and forgiveness. Even the word *Passover* (meaning *pretermisssion* or to *disregard intentionally*) reflects forgiveness. Jesus Christ is called the Lamb of God (John 1:29, Revelation 5:6) because He was the Passover sacrifice. Love that produces such forgiveness is manifested in the willing sacrifice of His life. This is especially understood by those who reside in heaven:

REVELATION 5:11-14 And I saw and I heard *the* voices of many angels around the throne, and *the* voices of the living creatures and the elders, and thousands of thousands, 12 Saying with a loud voice, "**Worthy is the Lamb Who was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and blessing.**" 13 And every creature that is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and those that are on the sea, and all the things in them, I heard saying, "To Him Who sits on the throne, and **to the Lamb, be blessing, and honor, and glory, and sovereignty into the ages of eternity.**" 14 And the four living creatures said, "Amen." And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped *Him Who* lives into the ages of eternity.

Ever notice in the book of Revelation that everyone, men and angels alike, *only* use the name *Lamb* when referring to Jesus Christ? They do not use the name of Jesus Christ or the Son of God. Why? The God who created **all** living things proved His love **through** His sacrifice. The angels who wander the earth are firsthand witnesses of all the terrible sins of mankind that Jesus Christ is willing to forgive. Above all created beings, they comprehend the *agape* love of God that can forgive such horrors.

Partaking of the blood and body of Jesus Christ and renewing our covenant with Jesus Christ at Passover includes **forgiving others because forgiveness of others is the measure by which God forgives us**. Forgiveness is the outpouring of God's *mercy* and the gauge of the *agape* love that resides in our own hearts.