

For If, Forgive

Matthew 6:14-15



Rock Hill Baptist Church
605 Rock Hill Road
Lexington, Tennessee 38351

Pastor David Buffaloe
731-845-6104
online at bibleteacher.org

FOCAL Read Responsively **Matthew 6:14-15** **For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**

One of the hardest things for a Christian to do is to *forgive someone*. Yet forgiveness is the mark of authentic Christianity.

The genuine Christian knows in his or her heart of hearts that God commands we forgive those who have wronged us. **God is love, and God resides inside of each and every Christian. Forgiveness is love acted out toward our enemies.** If you will not forgive, you may not be saved. Bible Teacher **John MacArthur** said:

“Never are you more like God when you forgive. Never are you less like God than when you refuse to forgive. “

Forgiveness is what Christians DO.

The Holocaust was one of the most tragic, terrible event that ever occurred in the history of mankind. Adolf Hitler and his madmen systematically tortured, experimented on, and murdered millions of people in his "death camps". The majority of those harmed were Jewish. In Los Angeles, California the **Simon Wiesenthal Center** documents the atrocities that Hitler's thugs perpetrated on God's Israel.

ILLUSTRATE 1 Simon Wiesenthal was a Jewish

prisoner in the Maudhousen Concentration Camp, Poland. Though a Jew I don't believe Wiesenthal ever accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior. One day he was assigned to clean out the hospital that was used to give medical attention to wounded German soldiers. That evening Wiesenthal had a nurse come to him, take him by the hand, and lead him to the bedside of a SS soldier who lay dying, only 21 years old. His face was covered with puss-soaked rags, his eyes hidden behind the gauze. When Wiesenthal came near the young man grabbed his hand and held on to it. He said he needed to talk to a Jew. He didn't want to die before he confessed the sins he had committed against helpless Jews. This young man was one of many soldiers that executed Jewish men, women, and children. He recalled that on one occasion his comrades had set a house on fire. As the Jews ran from the house he helped gun them down. Oh, how he wanted to be forgiven

Wiesenthal listened to the dying man's story, and then jerked his hand out of that dying man's hand. Walking away without saying a word he would not forgive that trooper. Later Wiesenthal wrote his life's story in a book called *The Sunflower*. The book ends with one question: "What would you have done?"

ILLUSTRATE 2 Corrie ten Boom was a Christian who was arrested and sent to Nazi concentration camps for harboring and assisting the Jews. Corrie lost her entire family - her mother, father, and sister - to the death camps. She narrowly escaped with her life. Years later Corrie was approached by a man who had been a guard at one of those camps. This man had often humiliated her

and her sister. Though he never physically raped them, he would have them remove their clothing so he could "inspect" them.

The man that stood before her now was not the same man who tormented her. He told Corrie that he was now a Christian. He apologized for the evil that he had done, and, sticking out his hand, asked if she would forgive him. Corrie struggled within herself. *Forgive him? This man was part of the reason her family was dead.* Corrie wrote:

"I stood there with coldness clutching at my heart. I prayed, Jesus, help me! I thrust my hand into {the guard's hand} and I experienced an incredible thing. A warm reconciliation seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes. 'I forgive you, brother,' I cried with my whole heart. For a long moment we grasped each others hands, the former guard, the former prisoner. I have never known the love of God so intensely as I did in that moment."

If you are a born again Christian then you *must forgive others.*

Forgiveness Is Central To The Christian's Relationship With God

FOCAL **Matthew 6:14** **For if ye forgive men their trespasses...**

Word Study Note that the first word in our text is "for" (*gar pronounced gar*), which is a *Primary Particle*.

used in an argument. You could translate it as "for this reason".

Now when you read "**for this reason**" in a sentence what you want to do is *look backward into the context*. For *what* reason? Look at your context:

CONTEXT Matthew 6:9-13 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. [10] Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven. [11] Give us this day our daily bread. [12] And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. [13] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

What is immediately before this "**for this reason**" is the **reason we need to forgive**. Jesus had just finished giving His disciples a model for prayer. If you remember that last week we learned that the disciples came to Jesus and said "Please teach us how to pray". Jesus taught them how to pray in what we call **the Lord's Prayer**. If you remember the prayer **asked that God's Name be hallowed, and that His Kingdom and Will be done both here and on the earth**. Only after praying these things are we to ask for **our daily bread** as well as **forgiveness for our sins**. Notice how Jesus addressed forgiveness:

forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors

Word Study That word "**debt**" is the Greek **OPHEILEMA** (*οφειλημα pronounced of-i'-lay-mah*), which literally means "**that which is owed someone, is due someone, a debt**".

The idea is that we *all owe somebody something*. We have all offended at one time or another. We have all disrespected someone, or have taken something from someone, or have injured someone. You might say "but I've not injured anybody that I know of". May I ask this.

What about God?

That's what the text is talking about. Jesus said that as we pray we should ask God to "**forgive us our debt**". We owe God. We should be praising God continually. We should be thanking Him for giving us life. Yet most of us, when we get a boo boo, bitterly complain against God. Some of us have - at one time or another - taken His holy Name in vain. Some of us have committed sexual sin in violation of His commandments. Or we have violated His other commandments at one time or the other. We are indebted to God. But Jesus goes further. He says "**forgive us our debts, AS we forgive our debtors**".

Jesus made it very clear that **our indebtedness to God should always drive our willingness to release others from indebtedness**.

If you are a Christian God has forgiven and *continues to forgive* your breaches and sins against Him. Sins against

God are *eternal*. If God can forgive your *eternal* sins against Him then you should have enough grace within you to forgive the *temporary* sins that people commit against you.

When you read the clear text of our focal verse it very plainly states "**if you will not forgive others, God will not forgive you**".

FOCAL Matthew 6:14-15 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Word Study Jesus uses a different word in verses 14-15 for our indebtedness. This time He uses the word "**trespasses**", which is the Greek PARAPTOMA (*παραπτώμα pronounced par-ap'-to-mah*). **This word means not "indebtedness" but "deviations from truth, uprightness, sideslipping, sin".**

The Lord wants His people to understand that "**just as God has forgiven you - for Christ's sake - offenses against His Person, He expects YOU to forgive others when THEY offend against YOUR PERSON. If you're a Christian you represent Christ. You must forgive!**

Unbelievers are going to offend us. Note that Jesus uses the word "**men**" in our focal text. "**If you forgive not MEN**". People are going to hate Christians, especially if

we are the Christians that are genuine and not fake. The world doesn't hate the *fake Christian*. The fake, the plastic, the *pretend believer* is no threat to Satan nor his minions.

The world will hate the genuine Christian for he or she will be like Christ - even when offended.

John 15:18-19 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. [19] If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

You who are Christians don't belong to the world. You belong to God. What does the Lord expect you to do? Forgive them.

Jesus told us:

Matthew 5:43-48 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. [44] But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; [45] That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. [46] For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? [47] And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so? [48] Be ye therefore

perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Forgiveness is love expressed to those who do not deserve it. Jesus loved us before we ever loved Him. You need to love others whether they love you or not.

If your love is no better than a **tax collector's love**, then it's not God's love. If you don't have God's love in you then, dear friend, you *may not be saved*. Examine yourselves. If you are saved, you are commanded to forgive!

Forgiveness Is Central To Your Own Well Being

FOCAL Matthew 6:14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

ILLUSTRATE On March 8, 2009 **Pastor Fred Winters** of First Baptist Church of Maryville was shot to death by 27-year-old **Terry Sedlacek** during their worship service. The bullet from the gunman's .45 hit the Bible the Pastor was preaching from. The Bible exploded, turning Sacred Scripture into confetti. The bullet then pierced the Pastor's heart. **Fred's wife Cindy said** at his funeral,

“I am not going to hate. I am going to survive this thing. I hope the man who did this learns to love Jesus.”

ILLUSTRATE Dear friends, suicide bombers strap dynamite on their backs so they can "punish" people not

of their religion for some imagined slight. May I remind you that the suicide bomber not only kills others, but he himself is killed. The person who holds on to a grudge is like a suicide bomber. The grudge eats at them and, like the bomber, they damage others as well!

Forgiveness doesn't mean that you *deny* the other person hurt you. It doesn't mean that the person who hurt you isn't responsible. Forgiveness never minimizes or justifies the wrong that was done to you. You are not excusing the act. What you are doing is *releasing* your anger and your desire for vengeance to God.

The Lord tells us:

Romans 12:19-21 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. (20) Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. (21) Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

You *cannot* overcome evil with evil. When you do evil, evil will DO YOU!

God tells us in the Book of Romans that we who are His are **never to avenge ourselves**. When we do not forgive others their trespasses we set ourselves up for a fall. Not only can we make ourselves sick and sleepless harboring that grudge, but we also put ourselves in the place of

God. That's a dangerous place to put yourself, because, dear friend, you are not God!

ILLUSTRATE The Bible tells us the story of a young boy by the name of Joseph. You remember him? He was the young lad who's father gave him a “coat of many colors”. His brothers became jealous of Joseph because of the way that his father Israel seemed to prefer him above the other sons.

Genesis 37:3 Now **Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colors.**

The brothers hatched up a plan. When Joseph came out to see them in Dothan the brothers saw him coming from a distance and began to plot against him.

Genesis 37:20 **Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.**

Joseph's brother Reuben plead with the others. “Don't kill him – let's just throw him in a pit. Judah said, “I've got a better idea. Sell him to the Ishmaelites, and take his coat, dip it in animal blood, and pretend that Joseph was killed by a wild animal”. The other brothers agreed, and that's exactly what they did, taking the bloody coat back to their father as the Ishmaelites took Joseph toward Egypt.

Joseph was seventeen years old when he was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers (**Genesis 37:2**). Because Joseph was faithful to God at the age of **thirty years old**

he was not only released from prison, but he had risen to become second only to the King of Egypt (Genesis 41:46). The Bible says:

1 Peter 5:5-6 ... **God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. (6) Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:**

Joseph humbled himself **under the mighty hand of God, and God exalted him.** Thirteen years have passed since his brothers sold him into slavery. One day Joseph looks up, and guess who he sees standing in front of him?

The brothers who, in jealousy, had thrown him in a pit. Ten of his brothers stood before him begging him for food. Did Joseph cast these men into a pit? Did he murder them or sell them into slavery as they did with him? No.

Joseph understood that God ultimately controls all things. God is in control, not us. Joseph forgave his brothers long before they stood in front of him in Egypt.

Genesis 45:4-8 **And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. (5) Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. (6) For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither**

be earing nor harvest. (7) And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. (8) So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

Because Joseph would not put himself in the place of God God's Israel grew from an old man twelves sons and their wives to a mighty nation that would eventually leave Egypt under the guidance of Moses.

We are not God, and cannot see what He is doing. What God asks us to do is *trust Him*. Forgive those who have harmed you *for your own sake*. Unforgiveness is like acid. It eats away at the container that holds it.

When you forgive men their trespasses, you release yourself from the negative emotions associated with unforgiveness. You also open the door whereby God can bless you or – if necessary – avenge you.

You Must Remember That All Christians Represent CHRIST

FOCAL Matthew 6:14-15 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: (15) But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

ILLUSTRATE Following the Civil War General Robert E Lee – himself a Christian - visited a home of someone he knew in Kentucky. The lady of the house

pointed to a limbless, battered tree trunk standing on the front lawn, and said, "Before the Union army came through here, that was a beautiful, magnificent magnolia tree. Look at what their artillery fire did to my tree. What do you think about that?" The General looked at the lady and said, "Cut it down and forget it".

That's good advise. If you have been offended by someone – if they have hurt your tree – then **cut it down and forget it**. Put it in the hands of God, and then press on as a Christian in the Lord Jesus Christ. **"If you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses"**.

I have heard people recite offenses that others have committed against them *long after the offender was dead*. Do you really relish giving someone that much control over your life. Live for Jesus. Live like Jesus.

The Bible tells us that **"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners"**. If you're a Christian you are saved because Jesus hung on that Cross for you. You're forgiven and don't deserve it. Forgive others regardless as to whether you think they deserve it or not.

In **Matthew 18:23-35** Jesus made it very clear that God's people are to forgive. In this parable a man who owed **ten thousand talents** – a very large sum of money – was graciously forgiven this large debt. The man that was forgiven then went out and **cast the man that owed him a hundred pence** – just a tiny amount of money – into prison. When the man who forgave the ten thousand talents heard about it he was enraged. He called for the

one he forgave and said:

Matthew 18:32-33 O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: (33) Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?

God forgave each and every Christian in this place the equivalent of **ten thousand talents**. Your sins are forgiven, not because you're good, but because God lowered Himself to make payment for your sins. He did a great thing when He saved you. The sins that people commit against you and I are but tiny, **one hundred pence** sins compared to the sins God forgave in us. As God has forgiven us the greater, we must forgive men the lesser. God died for us. He deserves our obedience.

If you cannot forgive then you need to ask yourself “Am I forgiven by God? Am I truly saved?” That's a good question to know the answer to. If you are saved, God is in you. If God is in you, He gives you the capacity to forgive. Period. God enables, and God expects you to do it. If God is not in you then you *need to be saved*. Quit pretending, and call on the Name of the Lord, and you will be saved.

May God empower this message by His Spirit.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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Matthew 6:9-13; Matthew 6:14-15; John 15:18-19; Matthew 5:43-48

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Word Study That word "debt" is the Greek OPHEILEMA (*οφειλημα* pronounced *of-i'-lay-mah*), which

- Jesus made it very clear that **our indebtedness to God should always** _____

Word Study "trespasses", which is the Greek PARAPTOMA (*παραπτωμα* pronounced *par-ap'-to-mah*).

- Forgiveness is _____

Forgiveness Is Central To Your Own Well Being

Matthew 6:14; Romans 12:19-21; Genesis 37:3; Genesis 37:20; Genesis 37:2; 1 Peter 5:5-6; Genesis 45:4-8 _____

You Must Remember That All Christians Represent CHRIST

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