

Forgiven



KEF

2014



## Forgiveness, Who Is It For?

One of the most difficult areas for many Christians comes in the area of forgiveness. On the surface forgiveness seems easy, and it is easy in many instances, but there are still some very tough areas to come to terms with when it comes to forgiving. So the question is “who is forgiveness for”? The answer is that it is for anyone and everyone. Mark 11:25 says “And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses” (NKJV). These words are spoken by Christ Himself. What it is saying is that in order for us to be forgiven by God we have to forgive others for anything we have against them. We are also told in Luke 6:37, again by Jesus, “Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven.” (NKJV). The implication is that if you don’t do these things then God won’t do them for you.

I believe that before we can forgive others we first of all have to be able to allow ourselves to be forgiven. Many people ask God for His forgiveness for something, but even after they have done so they still want to carry the guilt and the shame of their “sins” with them. That is an all too common scenario. Satan puts it into our minds that there is just no way that God will forgive us of our particular transgression, that we are totally unique in our sin, that nobody else has ever... fill in the blanks. Sadly society is more than happy to perpetuate that myth too. So Satan makes us take up the weight of our sin burden again and convinces us to distance ourselves from God and His Amazing Grace. But how true is what Satan says? First let us consider the source...Satan. We are told by Jesus in John 8:44 that Satan is “a liar and the father of it” (NKJV) or as the NIV says, “When he (Satan) lies, he speaks in his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies”. So if he speaks to us of an unforgiving God, he is lying. If you read the Word of God in 2 Timothy 3:16 we are told “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (NKJV). Then in John 17:15-17 we find Jesus praying for His disciples and He says “I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one”. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify by your truth. Your word is truth” (NKJV). This means that the inspired Word of God (the Bible) is the Truth. So when we read in Daniel 9:9 that “To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him”. (NKJV), in other words we have

sinned against Him, we can be absolutely sure that He will be compassionate, merciful and forgiving. Psalm 103:12 tells us “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us” (NKJV). Having established that God is a forgiving God and that He will forgive us of our sins, let us address Satan’s lie that our sin is much too despicable and vile to be forgiven. The Bible tells us very clearly in Matthew 12:31-32, Mark 3:28-29 and Luke 12:10 that all sins will be forgiven except one and that are blaspheming the Holy Spirit. I am fairly sure that not many people these days need to worry about that. What it means by “blaspheming the Holy Spirit” is that we attribute miracles performed by the power of the Holy Spirit to Satan. All other sins are forgiven if we confess and repent of them. Therefore Satan trying to convince you that God could never forgive you for your transgressions is a lie. To prove my point let us look at some of the Godly people in the Bible and see what happened to them. Moses murdered an Egyptian (Exodus 2:11-12) but he was not abandoned by God. He also failed to give God the glory at the waters of Meribah and was punished by not being allowed to enter the Promised Land (Numbers 20:1-12), but despite this, God still showed mercy and kindness to him, so much so that God even spoke to Moses “as a friend” (Exodus 33:11). We know that it is in God’s company as both he and Elijah appeared during the transfiguration of Christ (Matthew 17:1-13, Mark 9:2-11 and Luke 9:28-36). Then there is David, a man after Gods own heart (1 Samuel 13:14), yet he committed adultery with Bathsheba and was directly responsible for her husband, Uriah’s murder (2 Samuel 11). Despite this God faithfully kept His promises to David. Of course God punishes us for our transgressions but He still loves us regardless. Then there is Manasseh, the “most evil” king of Judah (2 Chronicles 33:1-10). He led Judah away from God, desecrated the Temple, sacrificed children to pagan gods, practiced fortune-telling, divination and witchcraft, he encouraged idol worship and “He did much evil in the sight of the Lord”. Surely he was beyond God’s forgiveness? No, even he was forgiven after he humbled himself and repented before God. Abraham lied (Genesis 12:10-20), Sarah (Genesis 18:10-15) and Thomas (John 20:24-29) doubted, Saul persecuted Christians and endorsed their murder (Acts 8:1), Peter denied Christ (Matthew 26:69-75, Mark 14:66-72, Luke 22:54-62, John 18:15-27), Jesus forgave the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43), the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11), prostitutes, mad men (Luke 8:2) and even His own killers (Luke 23:34). So we can clearly see that we have a forgiving God. Not only does He forgive us but He also uses those He has forgiven to achieve His ends. Consider the case of Rahab the prostitute in Joshua 2. She eventually became the mother of Boaz who is an ancestor of Jesus’ earthly father, Joseph (Matthew 1:5).

There is a catch though. In 1 John 1:9 we read “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness”. Now confessing our sins to God should be easy, after all He already knows anyway, but I still believe He still wants us to admit our wrongdoing to Him in order to show ourselves that we realize it was wrong. As a parent I often used to know which of my children had erred, but I still wanted them to own-up. That is part of the repentance process... admitting to yourself that you transgressed. Bear in mind that repentance isn't simply a “whoops, sorry”, it is a heartfelt and conscious turning away from that transgression. It is worthless to confess and repent of a sin and then go back out and commit the same sin over and over. Romans 6:1-2 advises us not to keep on sinning in order that we may receive more Grace. Just because a sin is forgiven doesn't mean that it is condoned. That isn't the case. Sin will be punished, however it will be forgiven too and that is the most important thing. Without forgiveness there is no hope.

It is often more difficult to forgive yourself than it is to forgive others. It seems to be a human trait to want to continually beat yourself up over a sin; in some cases it almost seems that it consumes a person. But here is the truth; if you confess your sin to God (and repent) it will be forgiven. Once you place it before God you must leave it there, if you don't then it shows that you are not trusting God or His Word. The sin isn't yours anymore; Christ bought it with His blood at Calvary, why are you taking it back? Surely if God can forgive you then you can forgive yourself, or are you better, more important or more powerful than He is? Leave it nailed to the cross, lighten your burden, don't worry...there will be more burdens along the way! Once you forgive yourself it becomes much easier to forgive others, after all, to not forgive them empowers Satan not you. He loves an unforgiving heart. He can grow revenge, hatred, contempt and division in the fertile soil of unforgiveness. Why give him that power in your life? We are told to resist Satan (James 4:7) not encourage him.

Forgiveness is also expected of us. In Ephesians 4:32 we read “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted (compassionate), forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (NKJV) and again in Colossians 3:13 “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” (NKJV). Some people say that forgiveness is too difficult, especially for heinous sins or crimes and especially ones where loved ones are the victims, but in Matthew 11:30 Jesus says “For my yoke is easy and my burden is light”, so how can this be? I believe forgiveness is like any other activity or skill, the more you do it, the easier it becomes. When I was a child I, like most people, learned to fasten my shoe laces. It took a lot of effort and a considerable amount of

time to accomplish. As I got better at it, through lots of practice, it became quicker and easier. Now I am an adult I have shoe lace tying as a fine art and second nature. Any sufficiently trained and practiced athlete, artisan, craftsman or expert got to be successful with a whole lot of practice. They make everything look so easy, almost effortless, even if it isn't. Forgiveness is easy if we practice it and you will get plenty of opportunity to do so in this world I assure you.

Forgiveness must never be confused with condoning. We are instructed to love the sinner not the sin itself. We can hate the act, but not the actor. That is sometimes not easy. How do you forgive the drunk driver who has just killed your loved one? Or the terrorist who takes innocent lives in an act of malice? The truth is we can't, not on our own; we need God's help and strength. God will help if we ask. After all if God can forgive and we are made in His likeness (Genesis 1:26) then we can forgive.

In conclusion, forgiveness is expected of us, it is required of us and it is granted to us. This is God's promise to us, and He keeps His promises. The forgiven, forgive. The unforgiving are unforgiven. Practice forgiveness by first forgiving yourself, and then forgive others.

© Copyright K.E Ferguson 2015-2017