

What is Forgiveness?

by Dr. Joseph H. Thompson

It is easy for most christians to understand what God's forgiveness means. God removes a sin you have committed and remembers it no more. The act of God's forgiveness is that the sin will not be counted against you and place you out of God's salvation. Jesus asked God to forgive man as he hung on the cross crucified. This is only found in the gospel of Luke 23:34 *"Jesus said, 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they are doing.'"*

We understand God's forgiveness, but what does the bible teach about forgiving our fellowman? How are we to act when we are wronged? How do we forgive our brother in Christ? Can not forgiving a brother or sister keep us from heaven?

1. Forgiveness, a part of salvation

Proverbs 19:11 *"A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense"*

What does it mean to forgive?

**Forgiveness occurs when you no longer feel the desire to punish,
you have pardoned, cancelled a debt, let go of a hurt, overlooked an offense
and moved on with your life.**

2. The Bible Teaches Us to Forgive.

a) God cannot forgive us if we do not forgive our fellowman, enemy, christian or non-christian.

Matt 5:7 *"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."*

Matt 5:38-48 *"...If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also...."* (Also Luke 6:27-37)

Mark 11:25-26 *"...if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him,...."*

b) We are to forgive our christian brothers and sisters.

Matt 18:21-35 *"...how many times shall I forgive my brother...."*

Eph 4:32 *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other,
just as in Christ God forgave you."*

Col 3:13 *"Bear with each other....Forgive as the Lord forgave you."*

Forgiveness is taught in the Lord's prayer

Matt 6:9-15 *"...Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors...."* (Also Luke 11:4)

c) Rebuke the christian brother who sins. Look for repentance. If he repents, then forgive.

Luke 17:3-4 *"...rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him....."*

Matt 18:15-17 *"....treat him as you would a pagan....."*

3. A Christian is Not to Seek Revenge.

Exodus 23:4-5 *"If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off....."*

Proverbs 24:17-18 *"Do not gloat when your enemy falls...."*

Proverbs 24:29 *"Do not say, 'I'll do to him as he has done to me;....'"*

Proverbs 25:21-22 *"If your enemy is hungry, give him food.....you will heap burning coals on his head..."*

Romans 12:17 *"Do not repay anyone evil for evil...."*

1 Peter 3:9 *"Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult...."*

Romans 12:19-21 *"...It is mine to avenge; I will repay, says the Lord...."*

Sins are to be reconciled. Punishment for sins can be handed out by God or mankind. God has given authority to inflict punishment through the establishment of the governing bodies. Romans 13:1-7

4. Forgiving Oneself

After a person sins, has a repentant heart and has asks God to forgive their sin, sometimes they have a hard time forgiving themselves. It takes time for the person to heal, to forgive themselves for what they have done. they feel guilty, remorse, sad. This usually hinders the work that the person could do for God's Kingdom. As people forgive that person, they will feel that everyone is supporting them and want them to be back in the fold. Forgiving oneself can be very hard and has to be done.

5. Forgiving doesn't mean Forgetting

God is the only one who can forgive and forget sin. God removes the sin as far as the east is from the west. Not so with man. If a person has a difficult time not sinning when they are in particular situation, then don't put them in that position to be tempted to sin again. The bible calls this a stumbling block. We are to help the weaker christian with their weaknesses and help them avoid traps that could ensnare them.