

**TITLE: THE DEPTH OF FORGIVENESS**

**TEXT: LUKE 17:3-4; HEBREWS 10:17**

**INTRO:** Forgiveness is one of the most difficult concepts in this world. Some people refuse to give it, and some people can't seem to accept it! But forgiveness is an integral part of Christianity. **Luke 24:46-47**—*it behooved Christ to suffer & rise from the dead the 3<sup>rd</sup> day and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations...*

**I. THE NEED FOR FORGIVENESS:**

- A. What is forgiveness? The two main Greek words translated “forgive” or “forgiveness” mean “to send away, let go, depart; to free fully, release, to acquit and set free one accused of a crime, to release a debtor.”
- B. Forgiveness is for the non-Christian (**Acts 2:38**—*repent & be baptized...*); & for the Christian (**1 John 1:9**—*if we confess our sins, he is faithful to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*). Being forgiven is being cleansed!
- C. There is a very important fact we **must** understand before we can comprehend any facet of forgiveness (receiving it or giving it):
  1. **Col 2:13**—*“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”* You were **dead** spiritually (Hell-bound)! But you were made alive! Why?
  2. **Eph 2:4-5** makes it clear that this was by God’s grace. *“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved).”*
  3. **FACT:** We were dead in sins, and there is nothing we could do to repay. If we don’t understand and accept this, how can we ever truly accept God’s forgiveness? If we think we’ve earned something, or if we don’t acknowledge how great a debt we owed, then how can we forgive others?  
- **Luke 7:47** (in Simon the Pharisee’s house)—*“Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven (one’s perception of his own sins), the same loveth little.”* This woman recognized how great her sin was, and how much she needed Jesus. (*Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered – Rom 4:7*).

**II. THE PREREQUISITES FOR FORGIVENESS:**

- A. Forgiveness is available to all (it’s by grace, and this grace has appeared to all – **Titus 2:11**), but not all will receive it (**Mt 7:13**).
- B. Repentance is a prerequisite to forgiveness (**Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Mt 3:8**—*bring forth fruits worthy of repentance*).
- C. The non-Christian must follow the NT plan of salvation (believe, repent, confess, be baptized). The Christian – **1 Jn 1:9** (above).
- D. An important, and often overlooked condition to our forgiveness: We must forgive others if we want forgiveness from God!
  1. **Mt 6:12**—*Forgive us our debts, as (“when”) we forgive our debtors.* Jesus taught us to ask for forgiveness from God, and to place this condition on our own forgiveness! *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (v. 14-15).*
  2. **Mt 18:21** – *“Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?... Jesus’ reply: Seventy times seven!* He then told the parable of the unmerciful servant (**v. 23-35**), comparing how much we’ve been forgiven to how much we’re expected to forgive (no comparison)! This helps to put things into perspective!
  3. And this should be done in the right attitude (**2 Cor 2:7**—*“Forgive him and comfort him...”*).
  4. Are there conditions to our forgiving others? **Luke 17:3-4**—*If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.* So his repentance is a requirement. We can’t forgive someone who doesn’t want it! Forgiveness is a transaction between two parties. One gives; the other receives. **If one won’t receive, the other can’t give!**
  5. But keep the right attitude though! **Col 3:13**—*Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*
    - a. God forgives us when we repent and ask for forgiveness. So we must forgive others when they do the same.
    - b. But what if he won’t repent? Is this an opportunity to rescind the offer of forgiveness? When we sin against God (& all sin is against God—**1 John 3:4**), God doesn’t hope we won’t repent so He won’t have to forgive us! Forgiveness is in His outstretched hand & waiting for us to take. This should be our attitude toward others.
    - c. We need to recognize that if someone has sinned against us, and refuses to repent, this sin will cost him his salvation!
    - d. We need to make it easy for someone to repent and ask for our forgiveness. Don’t hold a grudge, or make this person jump through hoops to win back your favor. **\*\*Remember Jesus attitude in Luke 23:34**—*“Forgive them Father...!”*

**III. LIVING WITH FORGIVENESS (FORGIVING YOURSELF & MOVING ON):**

- A. “Have I really been forgiven?” How many times have we wondered this? Can God really forgive me? **1)** What I did was too horrible to forgive, or **2)** He’s already forgiven me for this so many times before, how can He forgive me again?
  1. Have you truly repented? Repentance is a change of mind resulting in a change of action. You’ve decided to stop sinning. This doesn’t mean that you can’t be forgiven if you commit that sin again! God remembers iniquities no more (**Heb 10:17**).
  2. Have you forgiven others? Do I really have a forgiving attitude if I still get mad at this person at times? Forgive as you’ve been forgiven (**Col 3:13**)! When God forgives, He forgets! If we would understand this, then it wouldn’t be so hard to forgive others & forget the things that are done to us.
- B. Now, forgive yourself!
  1. There’s nothing more you can do. You’ve repented. You’ve produced fruit worthy of repentance by correcting what you’ve done, where possible. You can’t change the past; God knows this. He remembers your iniquities no more (**Heb 10:17** – this is part of the promise that came with the new covenant).
  2. If you still can’t forgive yourself...if you still think your sins are worse than everyone else’s, then think about Paul (compare yourself to him). How many Christians have you killed? Yet Paul said, *“This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark... (Phil 3:13-14).”*

**CONCLUSION:** Are you a forgiving person? Are you a forgiven person? Do you dwell on the past, or press on toward the mark?