

## Forgiveness (Matt 6:14-15) (PREACHED: RC AND RVTA MAY 2016)

“Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who have trespassed against us.”

- We understand theologically that we are forgiven of our sins **once and for all**.
  - It is not a **salvific** requirement that we continually to ask for forgiveness.
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  - **But**, as we come to God, Jesus **is** instructing us that we ought to come to God **in this manner**.
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  - **God has brought the blessing of forgiveness to those who are undeserving of it.**”

So, forgiveness...

Have you ever been forgiven for something you did?

- Forgiveness feels good because it **is** good.
- But God has also given us the capacity **to forgive**. As human being, even before we have the Holy Spirit, God has written into our DNA, the ability to forgive. And that’s good. And that’s right. Every time we forgive it’s the nature of God being revealed through His creation.
- **As followers of Christ, not only has God made us capable of forgiveness, He has also called us to forgive.**
- **Eph 4:32 “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ forgave you.”**

To be forgiven by God means that He has released us from the debt that we owed.

But then God takes it one steps further and gives us GRACE *on top* of that MERCY.

**That’s the kind of forgiveness that God has given to us.**

But then, Jesus doesn’t leave it there.

Honestly, I kind of just wish that Jesus would leave it right there -- leave it between me and God. But He doesn’t. He says, “Ok, so what about you and your neighbor? He calls us to go **deeper**.

He calls us to love our neighbor **in the same way** that He has loved us. And to forgive those who have trespassed against us, **LIKE He** has forgiven us.”

**Jesus doesn’t expound on any part of the Lord’s prayer... except one part... the forgiveness part.**

**And that’s where we pick it up today...**

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

- **Mathew 5:22** “But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgement. Again, anyone who says to a brother or a sister, ‘Raca’, is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.” Or **5:48** “Be perfect... as your Father in heaven is perfect.”
- So what are we to do with statements like this?
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- **When we look at whole sermon on the mount, as one big sermon, it begins to make a lot more sense...**

Jesus is announcing in the sermon on the mount how we enter the Kingdom, and how we live as citizens of the Kingdom.

Jesus reveals **HOW** we enter the kingdom right off the bat in the His theme statement (His first point of the sermon)

**Matthew 5:3** "Blessed are the poor in Spirit for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

In essence, **We don't earn a place in God's Kingdom. It is given to us by grace.**

**We enter the kingdom by God's grace, and then once we are a part of the kingdom, we live out kingdom ideals in our lives as salt and light in the world.**

- We have been brought into the kingdom by grace
- Part of the way that we do that is by living according to God's standard.

What's the standard? Jesus says it in **5:48** “Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

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- **But**, no matter how much I allow the truth of my new identity as a citizen of the Kingdom and a son of God to sink in... no matter how much I endeavor to live out these Kingdom ideals, by the power of the Spirit of God, I will never meet the standard of righteousness that Jesus is speaking of here. I will never do good enough to earn a place in the Kingdom of God.

And that's the point... We don't **earn** a place in God's Kingdom by living righteously; we are **given** a place in God's Kingdom by grace.

**So, as it pertains to forgiveness, as sons and daughters of the King; as citizens of the kingdom, how are we to live?**

**Luke 17:3-5**“So watch yourselves. If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, **forgive** them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying ‘I repent,’ you must forgive them.” The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”

- **The disciples never asked Jesus to increase their faith about anything except forgiveness.**

- It's hard work, and requires a deep supernatural empowering.

## 1. WE FORGIVE BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN

- *Read Matt 5:43-48 (NLT)*

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- We are to pattern our lives after the character of God.

And so, as it pertains to forgiveness, what does that look like?

Well... HOW DOES GOD FORGIVE?

### 1. God forgives sacrificially

- Forgiveness always requires some kind of sacrifice.
- That was the sacrifice that was required to satisfy the wrath of God, and the price that had to be paid for the forgiveness of our sins.
- We'll talk about this more later, but forgiveness will always require us to sacrifice something -- some right, entitlement, resentment, grudge, comfort, pride... it will always require something of us, as it did with the Father when He sent His Son, and the Son when He gave His life. .

### 2. God forgives liberally

- God doesn't choose which sins He will or will not forgive. He forgives liberally.
  - *Woman caught in adultery; the thief on the cross; the demonized man cutting himself in the caves; rich men, poor men, even the soldiers who crucified Him, even the tax collectors, even the IRS.*
- I'm not sure that there's a such thing as a "worse sin", but you know the sins I'm talking about (the really bad ones); even those sins He forgives.
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- **There's certain things that seem unforgivable to me. But when I remember the cross, and I remember the kindness of God toward me, and I remember how God has forgiven me, I know that I can forgive, even those things that seem unforgivable.**

### 3. God forgives permanently

- **Psalm 103:10-12** "He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."
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- To forgive us permanently doesn't mean that God forgives us and releases us from our debt, and then a few months down the road when we've done the

same exact thing again, say, “Nevermind. I’m over this forgiveness thing. I’m gonna start keeping a record of wrongs from here on out.”

- **God’s forgiveness is permanent. It’s done. It’s forever.**

#### 4. God forgives **freely**

- God’s forgiveness is not contingent on us **doing** anything or **performing** in any certain way.
  - **There are no strings attached.**
  - **Colossians 2:13-14** “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, **having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us.**”
  - God doesn’t wait for us to get our act together, or for us to start performing properly to forgive us.
  - He just **does it** because it’s who He is.
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    - Now, do we have to **respond** to that forgiveness by repentance in order to reap the full benefits of forgiveness?
    - **Yes. But, the point is...** Jesus didn’t wait around to see if we would repent before He did all that needed to do for our sins to be forgiven. He offered forgiveness unconditionally, and while we were still in our sin. Jesus died for us, while we were still sinners.
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    - That’s crazy. You might say, “People like that don’t *deserve* to be forgiven.” And you’re right. And there are people in your life, and in my life who may not **deserve** to be forgiven. But you know what? Before God, neither do I. We are **all** guilty; every one of us.
      - But because of God’s great mercy; because of His great love for us; He forgives us. He forgives **you. Me.**
    - **He forgives us freely. fully, forever, completely.**
    - **And because we have been forgiven *like that*, now we can forgive like that.**
- "Keep being more amazed that your wrongs are forgiven than that you are wronged." - John Piper**

## 2. **FORGIVENESS IS ABOUT ME, NOT THEM**

- **Forgiveness should not require a response or repentance.**
- Forgiveness can not dependent on the offender responding in a certain way, acknowledging their wrong, or even making himself available to discuss the issue with you.

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- How did our Father in Heaven forgive us?
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- **Rom 5:10** “While we were enemies of God, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His son.”
  - The father sent His son when we were in rebellion against God, and totally unrepentant, and maybe even unaware of much of our sin. He didn’t wait around until we were ready to repent.
- **Forgiveness means that God gets to judge all of that.**
- The point is, I was offended.
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- And this is about **ME**. Forgiveness is about **ME**. And so it is **MY** responsibility to deal with that offense. Were they in sin? That’s between them and God.
  - **But I know for a fact that if I harbor bitterness and resentment in my heart, then now I’m in sin.**
- This isn’t about the person who offended us, or about itemizing every wrong thing they have done and bringing them a ledger full of all of their sins against us. That’s between them and God. This is about us. This is about us doing what we know is right in the eyes of God.

In a perfect world, every relationship is perfectly healed and reconciled and redeemed.

But we don’t live in a perfect world right?

So that also means that forgiveness doesn’t *always* bring reconciliation.

For one of a few reasons:

- **1. The person who offended you may not be available to reconcile with.**
- **2. Reconciliation is unwise or dangerous.**
  - **But that doesn't mean we don't forgive them.** It just means that forgiveness isn’t always step one step two.
- **3. Reconciliation takes two to tango.** In order for reconciliation to take place, both parties need to want it.

Forgiveness is *also* about me, and not them, in the sense that forgiveness is not about “justice being served”. Forgiveness is an issue of *my* heart. It is between **me and God**. And the wrongs that **they have done... they can take with God**, because **God is the judge**.

### 3. **FORGIVENESS MEANS THAT GOD GETS TO JUDGE**

- The foundation of God’s throne are judgement and truth.
- God is the judge. He has the final say.

- **Forgiveness means that we give up our assumed right to be the judge, jury, or executioner.**
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- "In order to forgive not only do you have to forego being the executioner, you also revoke your right to judge the person. You cannot be the executioner, you cannot actively seek to bring about your own idea of justice or vengeance. And you also revoke the right to be the judge, to pass sentence and will the penalty or will revenge on the person even if you do not carry it out. Bitterness is the inward condition which holds a person liable for a sin." - Tim Keller
  - The same applies when we forgive. It will always require some kind of sacrifice. Probably many kinds of sacrifice. It's just how it is. It's just the nature of forgiveness. In some way, you will be required to lay down your rights to something.
  - One of those things is this: **In order to forgive we have to sacrifice the right to resent or hold a grudge.**
- And so we don't wait around until justice is served to do our part. We just do our part. And our part is forgiving. And we can let the the judge be the judge.

**Rev 20:12-13** "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds."

**Psalms 9:7-8** "But the LORD abides forever; He has established His throne for judgment, And He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity."

**Someday Jesus will return and judge everyone who should be judged.**

**You may have not hurt people in the way that you've been hurt.**

**Only Jesus is without sin. Only Jesus gets to cast that stone.**

I **do** know that I'm thankful that God has not dealt with me according to my sins.

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- "Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city."
- "So beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine. I will repay', says the Lord."

#### **4. FORGIVENESS IS FREEDOM**

**Freedom for them**

- There is freedom for you when you release the one you were holding captive under the weight of your judgement.
- You no longer hold their sin over their head. Why? Because God no longer holds your sin over your head.
- You free them from your electric chair, and you hand them over to the custody of God.

### Freedom for yourself.

- When we hold someone captive in our mind and heart and refuse to release and forgive them, **we** end up becoming the slave. We think we're not, but we are.
- It's sneaky and tricky, this unforgiveness thing, because we feel like we have the right to be bitter, and so we hold on to the unforgiveness or the grudge, and then the heart becomes trapped by bitterness and resentment, and all the sudden we're not only the victim, but the prisoner also.

### Freedom from Satan

- **Eph. 4: 26-27 26** "And don't sin by letting anger control you. Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil."
  - "Foothold" = "A place"
  - Topas = A geographical location.
  - You know what happens when you hold on to anger? It turns into bitterness and resentment.
  - Paul is saying, "When you harbor bitterness, you give a geographical location to Satan in your life."
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  - God wants to tear down that wall. He's ready. But you've got to take your hands off of it. You've got to surrender that bitterness. You've got to let go.
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    - It's called a "**justifiable resentment**" And for our whole life, we're never really free to walk in all that God has for us
    - **We're never really free. We're always slaves to something.**
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    - **As if the offense wasn't bad enough when it first took place, we end up holding on to it, and allowing it to own a part of us forever. -- we just end up carrying it with us for life. (insert monkey image).**
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    - And sometimes a predictable, terrible existence is easier to embrace than an unknown potentially wonderful existence because the unknown is scary. But with our bitterness and unforgiveness we **think** we have control. We're like, "I know this. I know how to deal with this. It's dysfunctional, but at least I'm in control."
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    - **But are you? Are you in control? Or are you under control?**