

Acknowledgment, Accountability, and Responsibility

Lesson 4 of Forgiveness

By

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Series Text: Ephesians 4:31-32

- 31 *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:*
- 32 *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Message Text: Matthew 18:21-22

- 21 *Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?*
- 22 *Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*

Introduction:

In the first message in this series I asked, “What does it mean to say, “I forgive you?” Charlie Kirk’s widow, following Charlie’s assassination, went on National TV and declared she had forgiven the assassin. I wondered why. He had not asked for forgiveness or even acknowledged that he was the one who killed Charlie, why would she tell the world, “I forgive him.”

I frequently hear Christians announce forgiveness for individuals who have wronged them, even though such individuals have neither confessed the wrong nor asked for forgiveness. Many of them say, “That’s what Christians are supposed to do.” But is it? Does God forgive us when we have not acknowledged a wrong or requested forgiveness?

Look at Luke 17:3-4,

Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, 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.

The significant thing to note here is that there is no requirement of reform or of changed behavior. Listen to Jesus again, *if he repent, 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...” Did you catch what Jesus said, “*...if he turn again to thee, SAYING, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.*”

Change of behavior is not the issue here, acknowledgement is the issue. It is apparent in Jesus’ instruction that the issue of those who trespass against us is an issue between them and God – all sin is against heaven. The requirement for forgiveness is confession or acknowledgment.

Look at the response of the disciples when they heard that... “*...and the apostles said unto the Lord, increase our faith....*” They understood the need for faith if we are going to leave the modification of behavior to the Lord and we are going to keep forgiving them. So they said, “*...Lord, increase our faith....*”

I. There Is An “If” Requirement

Forgiveness requires an acknowledgment or confession.

Jesus said “*...if he repent...*” The word “repent” is the translation of the Greek word “*meta-nae-o-ae-sae*” Which is the aorist, active, subjunctive, third person singular of the verb “*meta-no-eh-oh*” meaning “to change one’s mental attitude.” “

But notice, Jesus said “*...if he returns to you saying, I repent,*” you are to accept his statement and you are commanded to “*forgive*” him. The “*if*” is, “if he says he repents” then we are to forgive him.

The word “*forgive*” here is from the Greek word “*ah-phae-seis*” which is the future, active, indicative second person singular of the verb “*ah-phi-ae-mi*” meaning in the future if this occurs you are commanded to send him away without obligation– his debt has been paid.

This is the word used in I John 1:9 *If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just in order to forgive our sins* – in order to send us away without obligation because our debt has been paid. Now we are to send those who trespass against us away, they owe us nothing their debt has been paid.

Now we are beginning to see, “Is it forgive” or, “Is it forgive”? We have two prominent Greek verbs translated by our English word “forgive.” The verb “*ah-phi-ae-mi*” means to let them go, their debt has been paid – they have no other obligation. The second Greek verb is “*cha-riz-o-mai*” meaning “to treat them in grace- assume all of the expense and responsibility for maintaining a relationship with them. These two verb-grammatical forms which express action- work together in God’s dealing with us and in our dealing with those who have trespassed against us. We are to treat them in grace their debt has been paid. Yes! Lord, increase our faith!

But don’t forget the “If clause,” If they confess, If they say they repent. All that is

required is an acknowledgment that they have sinned.

II. So, Why Do We Get Off by Just Acknowledging We Sinned:

That's a good question and important to our understanding the Theology of the entire issue of sin and forgiveness.

The simple answer is *"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* (Romans 6:23) We were dead in trespasses and sin (Ephesians 2:1-3) and could not redeem ourselves- our redemption required the grace of God.

We are unable to redeem ourselves, pay our own debt, we were born in the slave market of sin. So, Jesus came, born of a virgin with no imputed sin, lived a sinless life incurring no sin debt of His own; died a sacrificial death to pay our debt; conquered death by His victorious resurrection, assuring us that though we be dead yet shall we live; ascended to His Father in His glorious ascension to intercede on our behalf, facing our accuser and informing the Father we are to be set free, our debt has been paid. And, all that was required was that we acknowledge our sin and our dependency upon Him- accept His offer of grace and acknowledge our reliance upon Him.

SEE! This is how we are enabled to forgive others who trespass against us, their debt has been paid, we are to set them free. They belong to Christ; He will deal with them.

"...forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

III. But Their Behavior Affects Me:

I hear you loud and clear; they annoy me too. I guess they even annoy God. Ooops! I guess, WE, even annoy God. But, He loves us! Hummn.... Yes! We are commanded to love one another! Hummn....

I Know! Vengeance is His!

Romans 12:17-19

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

We are not to return evil for evil but to provide all things *"honest"* (kalos) conduct ourselves honorable in all things. We are to give place unto wrath, meaning we

are to go out of our way to avoid wrath (orgae) -anger that is settled in the mind with a view to taking revenge.

So, He gets all the fun! But Wait!

Romans 8:28 *“And we know that God causes all things to work together for our good, to those who love the Lord, to those who are called according to His purpose.”*

This does not say that all things are good but tells us that God causes all things to work together for our good. That includes the trespasses of others against us, even their abuse of our grace.

Our ability to treat them in grace is enhanced by our “knowledge” that God is causing all these things to work together for our good.

“and we know” (oi-da-men). There are eight Greek verbs that are translated into our English text by our word “Know.” This word (oidamen) is from the same root as *“ei-don”* which means *“to see.”* **Ginosko** is the most common word for knowledge but frequently refers to the inception of knowledge or knowledge in progress, whereas, **“oidamen”** refers to complete knowledge that is a result of observation. It is in the perfect tense which means a completed action that has occurred in the past and the result continues through present time. It is in the active voice meaning that we have personally observed this. It is in the indicative mood which means it is true.

Since we know that God causes all things to work together for our good, we should have no problem treating those in grace who create our distress because God is causing all these things to work together for our good.

Then, there is I Thessalonians 5:18 *“In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”* We are commanded *“...in everything give thanks...”* Notice: this is “in everything” not “for everything.” Not everything is good, but God causes everything to “work together for our good.” So, in the sphere of everything we are to give thanks.

The second issue with this verse is, what is the will of God, the circumstances, or that we give thanks? The answer is Both. Both, the circumstances and the giving of thanks is the will of God.

Be careful here: understanding that our circumstances are within God’s will requires us to recognize three aspects of His will: directive, permissive, and overruling.

The mechanics for accomplishing this are given in James 1:2-4 *“Count it all joy brethren when you fall into various trials....”*

It is fitting that James should begin his epistle with an explanation of the purpose of testing. Remember! This is addressed to his flock which has been scattered because of persecution. They have suffered, are suffering and will suffer further. So James deals with that issue first. Let's look at it....

Let's Add it Up: James 1:2-4

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (various trials); Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

1. Consider all trials as a matter of joy.

James 1:2 *“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;”*

“count” (**hege'sasthe**) means to bring things before your mind - add it up. This word does not mean to simply consider all things as joy. Rather, it means to look at this from a divine viewpoint. Review what God has said about times like this and how He has worked it for your good, *“it all joy”* (**pasan charan**) **Charan** is an accusative singular meaning to **maintain a state of inner delight**. This word has the same root as the word grace, it always comes back to grace orientation. *“divers temptations”* means various trials or afflictions. In the midst of the trial we are to go back and add up how He has previously caused it to work together for our good and maintain a state of inner delight,

2. You can do that - If you know what testing will produce.

James 1:3 *“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.”*

“knowing” (**ginoskontes**) means to have complete understanding. A. Present Tense means continuous action of knowing. B. Active Voice means you (the subject) know. C. Participle means this is a matter of principle. *“trying”* (**dokimion**) means **that which has been tested and approved**. *“faith”* (**pisteos**) means **firm persuasion or confidence**. *“worketh”* (**katergadzetai**) means something on the inside working its way to the outside. *“patience”* (**hupmonen**) means **a state of peaceful, cheerful abiding**.

3. Let patience do her thing.

James 1:4 *“But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”*

"let" (echeto) is a command to keep on allowing patience to do her thing. **"perfect" (telioh)** means complete. **"work" (ergon)** means basic work or employment- allow it to do its job. That you may be **"perfect" (telios)** means complete or mature. That you may be **"entire" (holoklayros)** means sound in every part. **"wanting" (lipo)** means lacking. **"nothing" (madice)** means not even one thing.

IV. Forgiveness and Grace:

We come back to the question we raised earlier, is it forgive or is it forgive. In our first lesson in this series on forgiveness we raised the question, Is it forgive, or is it forgive? We pointed out that there are two Greek verbs that are translated in our English translations by the word forgive. The Greek word "αφιημι" (ah-phi-ae-mi) means to send away with no debt or obligation. The Greek word "χαριζομαι" (cha-rizo-mai) means to treat in grace assuming all the expense and responsibility for maintaining the relationship.

The two words are uniquely related. The command with "ah-phi-ae-mi" is to let them go free, no debt is owed. The command with cha-rizo-mai is that we are to assume all the responsibility for maintaining a relationship with others. See! Assuming all the responsibility for the relationship is legitimized by the fact that they owe no debt and are to go free, both of which are a result of Christ having paid their debt (and ours) on the cross of Calvary. That is why we are to forgive them (let them go free with no obligation) because they owe no debt, Christ paid it all.

I know! I hear you! I haven't forgotten, their behavior has affected you! It also affects their fellowship with God, so where does discipline fit in with grace and forgiveness:

V. How Does Discipline Fit In With Grace"

We established in our previous study that we do not lose our salvation when we abuse God's grace! Nor, do we have to ask for forgiveness to remain in that grace. Jesus paid for all our sins - past, present, and future. We remain in the grace of God regardless of our actions or attitudes! That is Grace!

But, our fellowship is broken with God as a result of sin and it is the confession of sin that restores broken fellowship. However, we never depart from the provision of God's grace no matter what our actions or attitude. But like the Prodigal we have to be "at home" (in fellowship) to have access to them.

It is only when we understand that concept that we are able to forgive (let them go free) regardless of their abuse of us. Having established the way God utilizes

discipline with grace we need to look at the principles we are to use in relationship to other people. Discipline is designed to correct our behavior and is administered because of grace.

God does not punish the believer who gets involved in sin! The sins of the believer have been charged to Jesus Christ and He has already paid that debt, past, present, and future.

Romans 4:6-8 says:

David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed [are] they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed [is] the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

God does not impute sin to the believer. How could God punish the believer for sins that are not imputed to him? The believer's sin is now a family matter and, while God does not punish His children, He does discipline them. Did you note that? God does not punish His children! Jesus has already paid it all. But, look!

Look at Hebrews 12: 6:

“For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.”

The word “*scourgeth*” is from the Greek word “*mastigoi*” (μαστιγοῖ). It refers to Jewish scourging. They used a whip with three leather thongs and applied thirteen stripes across the bare breast then thirteen stripes across each shoulder. That's thirty-nine stripes. The term “thirty-nine stripes” had significance. Under the Mosaic law a man could be beaten but not more than forty stripes; that was considered the maximum a man could survive (Deuteronomy 25:1-3). *Mastigoi*, translated *scourgeth*, means *to skin alive with the whip*.

Now Look at this! Hebrews 12:6 says:

“For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.”

Although that sounds like punishment it's not punishment! To punish means, *to impose a penalty of pain, loss, or suffering on a person for some behavior*.

The word, “chasteneth” used in Hebrews 12:6, is translated from the Greek word “paideuei” (παιδεύει). It should have been translated “discipline.” There's a significant difference between punishment and discipline. Follow this carefully, again! “Punish” means *to impose a penalty of pain, loss, or suffering on a person for some action*. “Discipline” means *to impose an affliction of pain, loss, or suffering upon a person in order to change their behavior*.

The distinction between “*punishment*” and “*discipline*” is in the motive. There may not be any difference between punishment and discipline in the affliction of pain, loss,

or suffering of a person. But there is a difference in the purpose. Let me restate the difference: The purpose of *“punishment is to penalize the person for a wrong.* The purpose of *“discipline” is to modify the person’s behavior.*

Now look at Hebrews 12:7-8:

“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.”

God is not going to allow His children to conduct themselves in a way that is not profitable to them, without trying to modify that behavior through discipline. If God is your father you will experience divine discipline when you walk contrary to His design for you. But remember, He has a different motivation for discipline than our earthly fathers.

Hebrews 12:9 says:

“Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected [us], and we gave [them] reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of Spirits and live?”

Now look at verse 10 carefully:

“For they verily for a few days chastened [us] after their own pleasure;...”

Our earthly fathers disciplined us *“after”* their own pleasure. The word *“after”* is translated from the Greek word *“kata”* which means according to the norms and standards. Our earthly fathers disciplined us to bring us into a line behavior that would be according to the norms and standards of that which would please them.

But, God’s purpose in disciplining us is to modify our behavior so we can have the greatest happiness.

Let’s examine the next statement of verse 10: *“...But He (God) for [our] profit,...”*

God disciplines us so we will conduct our lives within the framework of the guidelines that will produce the greatest joy in our lives.

“But He for [our] profit, that we might be partakers of His Holiness.”

Our earthly fathers disciplined us to mold us into that which was pleasing to them. But God disciplines us to mold us into that which will be profitable to us.

Hebrews 12:11 says:

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

God's discipline is often severe and at the time is not joyous. But it brings us back to the sphere of fellowship where we are empowered by the Holy Spirit and find both joy and strength in our walk with Him.

Then, finally look at the admonition of verses 12 and 13:

"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."

There is both instruction and warning found in this passage. Look at the instruction: *"...lift up your hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet..."*

These words are designed to encourage us when we are being disciplined. *"Hands which hang down"* and *"feeble knees,"* describe the posture of a person in depression. Snap out of it! Cheer up! And *"Make straight paths for your feet."* A corresponding idiom of our day would be, "Straighten up and walk right!"

Now, look at the warning in the rest of verse 13, *"...lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."*

Did you understand what He is saying? He warns that if the believer does not straighten up and walk according to God's design there is a danger of him dying physically, prematurely. The phrase, *"...lest that which is lame be turned out of the way;..."* is a reference to the sin unto death (I John 5:16-17).

NO! That does not mean you can kill those who are abusing your grace, they are not your servants, they are servants of God. He will discipline them.

Romans 14:4 addresses that,

Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

If you are a born again child of God, He will not punish you when you sin. But He will discipline you throughout your life in order to guide you into a path that will give you the happiness you desire.

The difference between punishment and discipline, then, is not in the application or degree of pain, loss or suffering, but in the motive. God has no interest in punishing you when you sin. Jesus has already settled that debt. But, in order for you to stay on the path that will produce true happiness in your life, He will skin you with the whip when you get out of line.

Conclusion:

So, we have been forgiven, our debt has been paid and we are commanded to *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you,*

with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:31-32).

We are to let those believers who offend us go, their debt has been paid. They are servants of the Most High God, and He, as their Heavenly Father, will address their unprofitable walk and discipline them as He will. Meanwhile, we are to treat them in grace and have compassion for them in the same manner God has let us go free because our debt has been paid by the Lord Jesus Christ, and treats us in grace, assuming all the expense and responsibility for a relationship with them.

It is ours to acknowledge our failure to comply with God's directives. We have an accountability to God, and we have a responsibility toward other believers with an attitude of grace that marked by forgiveness.

Next time, in our conclusion of this series on "Forgiveness" we will summarize the principles of forgiveness and identify our proper response to the abuse of our grace by others as we allow God to deal with their discipline. We are not to ignore such behavior and there are actions dictated in the Word of God as to How, When, Where, and Why we are to deal with that continuing abuse. Till then be grace oriented with gut wrenching compassion when they abuse you.

But it all begins at Salvation:

For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God...

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life...

With the heart man believes unto righteousness...

But with the mouth confession is made unto salvation...

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

(Ephesians 4:32)