

FORGIVING OUR BROTHER

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According to the New Testament, a Christian's purpose is to be like Jesus Christ. Matthew 10:25 says, "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master." We are to be "conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom 8:29). One of the important parts of Christ's image is forgiveness. Colossians 3:12-13 says, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

A condition for God's forgiveness

Acts 17:31 tells us that God has "appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"* (2 Cor 5:10). One of the key points about how we will be judged on that day is how we judge others. Jesus taught, *"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again"* (Matt 7:1-2; see also Luke 6:37). James 2:13 says, "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment." When Christ taught his disciples how to pray, he applied this principle to the subject of forgiveness. In Matthew 6:9, the Lord taught us to pray, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (see also Luke 11:1-4). He then said, *"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"* (Matt 6:14-15; see also Mark 11:25-26). In Matthew 18:23-35 Jesus taught a parable of a king that had compassion and forgave one of his servants a debt of

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10,000 talents. That same servant would not show mercy and forgive his fellowservant a debt of 300 pence (an insignificant sum in comparison to the debt which had been forgiven him). When the king heard of this, he *unforgave* this servant of his 10,000 talent debt. Jesus says, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (Matt 18:35). If we do not *from our hearts* forgive *every one* of our brother's sins against us, God will not only refuse to forgive us of any future sins that we commit, but He will also do like this king in the parable and *unforgive our past sins* which He has previously forgiven. That is extremely serious as we would then have every sin that we have ever committed on our account on Judgment Day.

Seventy times seven

In Luke 17:3, Jesus says "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him." In the next verse, the Lord teaches us the extent to which this teaching applies. He says, "*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.*" Each sin is a separate issue and we must treat it as such, even if it is seven times in a single day. Actually, Jesus does not limit it to seven times in a day. Peter asked Jesus, "*Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus says unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven*" (Matt 18:21-22). "Seventy times seven" shows us that forgiveness must be given without limit. Every time someone sins against us, if they repent we *must* forgive them. Ephesians 4:32 says, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." From these teachings, we see the great necessity of forgiving our brother every time he sins against us and repents.