

Forgiveness:

A Journey to the Heart of God

By Janet Lui

What is Forgiveness?

Forgiveness means to give up resentment towards someone who has wronged you as well as any claim to requital or retribution on the wrongdoer. It means a complete pardon of the transgressor.

Enright and the Human Development Study Group propose that: Forgiveness is the overcoming of negative affect and judgment toward the offender, not by denying ourselves the right to such affect and judgment, but by endeavoring to view the offender with benevolence, compassion, and even love, while recognizing that he or she has abandoned the right to them. The important parts of this definition are as follows: a) one who forgives has suffered a deep hurt, thus showing resentment; b) the offended person has a moral right to resentment but overcomes it nonetheless; c) a new response to the other accrues, including compassion and love; d) this loving response occurs despite the realization that there is no obligation to love the offender (Subkoviak, Enright, Wu, Gassin, Freedman, Olson, Sarinopoulos, 1992, p.3).

An unforgiving spirit is like a poisonous disease. It produces bitterness, anger, and rage. It can spread like a poison consuming one's life. Preventing one from experiencing the effective Spirit filled life that God has planned for us. The cure becomes the choice to forgive.

God's Promise to Forgive Us

2 Chronicles 7:14

If my people, who are called by My name, will:

- Humble themselves and pray
- Seek My face
- Turn from their wicked ways,

Then will I:

- Hear from heaven
- Forgive their sin
- Heal their land.

God Forgives and Heals, He is Compassionate

“Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits -

“Who forgives all your sins, and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desire with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

“The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in love. He does not treat us as our sins deserve, or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him, for He knows how we are formed; He remembers that we are dust” (Psalm 103:1—3, 8, 10—14).

We Fear God Because He Forgives

“Out of the depths I cry to You, O Lord. O Lord, hear my voice. Let Your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins - O Lord, who could stand? But with You, there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared” (Psalm 130:1—4).

God Forgives for His Sake

“I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, for My OWN sake, and remember your sins no more” (Isaiah 43:25)

God Invites Us to Come Freely for Forgiveness

“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters. And you who have no money, come, buy & eat. Come, buy wine & bread without cost. Why spend your money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, Listen to me - eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fair! Give ear and come to Me; hear Me, that your soul may LIVE!

“Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy on Him, for He will freely pardon.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts; neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.

“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater - so is My Word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire, and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:1, 2, 7—11).

Our Need of Forgiveness

John the Baptist's Teaching

“He (John the Baptist) went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Luke 3:3).

Jesus' Model Prayer

“Forgive us our sins, for we forgive everyone who sins against us” (Luke 11:4).

It is God's Pleasure and Will to Forgive

“In Him we have redemption through His blood - the forgiveness of sins in accordance with His pleasure and will” (Ephesians 1:7).

The Redemption "Package" brings Forgiveness of Sins

“For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption - the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13,14).

Forgiveness of Sins Comes Through the Name of Jesus

“All the prophets testify about Him - that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name” (Acts 10:43).

The Promise to Forgive is Sure Because God is Faithful and Just

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9)

“But when the heart yields to the influence of the Spirit of God, the conscience will be quickened, and the sinner will discern something of the depth and sacredness of God's holy law, the foundation of His government in heaven and on earth. The "Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," illumines the secret chambers of the soul, and the hidden things of darkness are made manifest. John 1:9. Conviction takes hold upon the mind and heart. The sinner has a sense of the righteousness of Jehovah and feels the terror of appearing, in his own guilt and uncleanness, before the Searcher of hearts. He sees the love of God, the beauty of holiness, the joy of purity; he longs to be cleansed and to be restored to communion with Heaven.” Steps to Christ, p. 24

Our Need to Forgive Others

Forgiveness is Reciprocal

“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive you” (Matthew 6:14,15).

“This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive from the heart” (Matthew 18:35).

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"

Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

"The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' " The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

"But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

"His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'

"But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. "When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." (Matthew 18:21-35)

Make Forgiveness a Habit

“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone forgive him, so your Father in heaven may forgive your sins” (Mark 11: 25).

Forgiveness is does not Give License to Sin

“If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day he comes back to you and says, I repent, forgive him” (Luke 17:3, 4).

Forgive as Christ Forgave

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

Holy Spirit to Aid in Forgiveness

“Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the father has sent me, I am sending you. And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit, he said. ‘If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven’” (John 20:21-23).

Forgiveness, a Part of Christian Living

“Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against each other. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues but on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity” (Colossians 3:13, 14)

Directed to Seek Forgiveness

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift at the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23,24).

A Brother Who Sins Against You

“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

“I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

“Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:15–20)

Example of Forgiveness in Regard to Church Discipline

"If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you, to some extent-not to put it too severely. The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven-if there was anything to forgive-I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes" (2 Corinthians 2: 5-11).

A Message to the Tell to the World

The Message of Forgiveness to Go to the World

"Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, 'This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things'" (Luke 24:45-48).

The Invitation

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are a far off-for all whom the Lord our god will call." (Act 2:38, 39)

Repentance Brings Forgiveness

"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and he may send the Christ who has been appointed for you-even Jesus" (Acts 3:19).

Through Jesus Forgiveness is Proclaimed

"Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you" (Acts 13:38).

The Beauty of the Savior Reveals Our Sin

"You, who in heart long for something better than this world can give, recognize this longing as the voice of God to your soul. Ask Him to give you repentance, to reveal Christ to you in His infinite love, in His perfect purity. In the Saviour's life the principles of God's law -- love to God and man -- were perfectly exemplified. Benevolence, unselfish love, was the life of His soul. It is as we behold Him, as the light from our Saviour falls upon us, that we see the sinfulness of our own hearts" (Steps to Christ 28).

Ministry of Reconciliation

“Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, and it is for you. For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

“So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:11-21).

Example Prayer of Forgiveness

Father God, I come to you as a God who is righteous and just. Thank you for not treating me as my sins deserve but for pardoning my offences against you, others, and myself. I thank you for the example of Jesus who prayed, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Please forgive my unforgiving spirit, my spirit of judgment and pride that have prevented me from forgiving. Now I ask you to forgive for . Help me to have your perspective and to no longer dwell on this wrong. As I release them from this offense I pray that you will heal my wounds.

Release me from any harbored feelings of anger, bitterness, hatred, malice and/or resentment. Please allow me to experience the benefits of forgiveness in Christ Jesus. Help me to entrust and the wrong they caused into your hands. Thank you, Father. In the strong and powerful name of Jesus I pray. Amen.