

# If Ye Cannot Forgive...

In examining all the above, we come to the point of raising certain questions about why it is that we are required to forgive if doing so has no actual effect of expunging guilt or relieving responsibility for transgression and sin. Moreover, since we are obviously required to forgive our fellow man, what happens if we cannot find it in ourselves to forgive someone who was injurious to us or harmed us?

*Why, if the LORD God only can forgive sins, are we told that we must forgive those who trespass against us? After all, what good are we doing them?*

Like it or not, these are legitimate questions that require answers. Strictly speaking, from the perspective of man only, it makes sense that we should forgive, as we would be releasing the one forgiven from, at a minimum, the burden of guilt. However, it is clear that man's perspective is not the only perspective applicable here. Rather, the view of the LORD God is preeminent, and man's perspective falls behind the LORD's. That we are instructed to forgive, and informed of the consequences of not forgiving, is clearly laid out in the following passages:

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. **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.** (*Matthew 6:12-15*)

Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*. **And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you**

**your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.** (Mark 11:24-26)

Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: **forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:** Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. (Luke 6:37-38)

Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, **I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?** And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. (Matthew 18:32-35)

*So, what is this about? Surely the LORD God doesn't require of man nonsensical things?*

No, the LORD God does not require of man silly things. Rather, what the LORD God is accomplishing through the requirement, is the setting forth of an indicator of the condition of the heart of each and every individual. If we recall, Jeremiah 17:9-10 tell us that our hearts are deceitful and wicked, and it is the LORD God only that knows and tries our hearts to allow us to perceive how we actually are. This is done so we can see ourselves for who and what we are, and hopefully begin the process of understanding that which is wrong with us, as it is how we are that condemns us. The desired end of this effort is reconciliation with the LORD God through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. In working toward that end, the LORD God has set forth indicators so that we may know where we stand. One of those indicators can be summed up in

one brief question:

*Can you forgive?*

This is not just forgive for the little things and transgressions made by those we are predisposed to forgive anyway, but includes the big things, the egregious things, and transgressions by those we find most difficult to forgive. Whether we forgive or not, it is certainly not going to affect the person who offended us. It does nothing spiritually to absolve them of guilt. Depending upon whether they know or care about it, their emotions may be affected to one degree or another. But that does nothing for their standing before God.

However, forgiving or failing to forgive directly affects us – that is, the individual who is to do the forgiving. Failing to forgive reveals several things about us – to ourselves first of all. And, whether we like it or not, to those around us. What matters is whether we pay heed to what we are being shown and what we choose to do about it. While we may examine both sides of this issue, it is the failure to forgive that has the greater impact, albeit, entirely negative. Thus failing to forgive is the issue that we must examine more closely.

While failing to forgive creates many other issues such as bitterness, we are concerned in this article with only those issues that directly impact our relationship with the LORD God ((Although bitterness does impact our relationship with the LORD God, it takes time for the bitterness of unresolved conflict and injury to set in. Long before then, our relationship with the LORD is impacted by our failure to forgive.)), which are markers of where our heart is. The preeminent concern is what we are implicitly conveying to the LORD God about how we ourselves want to be dealt with. If we will note the following statement by the Lord Jesus Christ:

And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. (*Luke 6:31*)

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.  
(*Matthew 7:2*)

Here we find the practical outworking of how the LORD God interacts with man, and how we are individually. If we diligently study the Scripture, we realize that the point of the LORD's interaction with man in this way is to bring each of us to the point of understanding how we fall short of righteousness. Through this, we also come to know why we are separated from fellowship with Him. By conveying to us that He is ready to forgive, and does forgive freely, and then giving us an admonition that if we do not forgive others He will not forgive us, He is setting a clear indicator or marker to evaluate, not just our own hearts, but how we want the LORD God to deal with us about how we are. When the LORD then brings out in us our unwillingness to forgive (as that is how our hearts are), He enables us to see that for ourselves and compare, and arrive at some conclusions for ourselves:

1. The understanding that it is utterly hypocritical to ask for forgiveness when you are unwilling to give it.
2. The understanding that our hearts are not even close to the heart of the LORD.
3. The understanding that if we want forgiveness, we had better accord others the same.

We must also ask the following:

1. Do we want to be dealt with hypocritically? ((Mind you, the LORD God will not deal with us in this way directly, but Satan, the fallen angels, and other men will be more than happy to fulfill the judgment and deal with us hypocritically.))
2. Do we want to be heard, and/or be close enough to the LORD God to be heard?
3. Do we actually want to be forgiven? Do we even care to be forgiven of our trespasses?

The understanding, and the questions which arise out of it, should make us cognizant that the whole issue of forgiveness is for man's (which is to say, "our") well-being and potential for reconciliation with his Creator. The understanding that man's forgiveness does nothing to absolve guilt and rectify wrong is not new, but has existed from the beginning. This is given witness by Joseph over the issue of being sold into slavery by his brothers:

And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, **Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father.** And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we *be* thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: **for am I in the place of God?** But as for you, **ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.** Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them. (*Genesis 50:15-21*)

By Joseph stating to his brethren "*am* I in the place of God?" when they desired forgiveness, he informs them that seeking forgiveness from him is in error. To ask such of Joseph is to ask the wrong source – that it is the LORD God to whom they should look for forgiveness. Furthermore, Joseph understood long ago that the LORD God allowed what happened for good. Thus, he himself holds no ill will toward them.

In sum, the requirement the LORD God has for us to forgive others is not about the "wrong" others do to us and our supposed magnanimity in forgiving them. Rather, it is about knowing and understanding where we stand before the LORD. It

becomes crystal clear that if we cannot find it in ourselves to forgive our fellow man, we can forget ever coming to Christ for forgiveness of our own transgressions of the commandments of God, and we can forget ever having reconciliation with the LORD through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

**“Even to give every man according to his heart . . .”**

Although “Appendix G: How the LORD God Deals With Man” conducts a more in-depth analysis, we examine it here for the purposes of understanding the totality of our violation of the Person and will of the LORD God in the transgressions we commit.

In evaluating the second commandment, its implications and ends, it becomes clear that the LORD God chooses to deal with man in a particular way which fulfills some difficult objectives. We must remember the objective of the LORD is to, without violating righteousness and without violating the will of man, bring every individual to reconciliation with Him – if that individual can be brought at all. Since man has fallen and resides in the state of iniquity, and the LORD God remains righteous, to interact with man and maintain righteousness is at best, problematic. Moreover, bringing man to the point of perceiving the way he is, seems to be an insurmountable difficulty. That man has a free will to exercise within the limits of his existence is exceptionally troubling, as man can choose what he will see and acknowledge, and what he will not. Hence, we arrive at an understanding of the wisdom of the method the LORD chose and subsequently declared unto man in His word:

I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, **even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.** (*Jeremiah 17:10*)

Eat thou not the bread of *him that hath* an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: **For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he:** Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is

not with thee. (*Proverbs 23:6-7*)

Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? **But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man:** but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man. (*Matthew 15:15-20*)

If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; **doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?** (*Proverbs 24:12*)

Here we see that the heart of each and every individual is the focus of the LORD's interaction with man. Moreover, He knows the heart of every individual and gives to that individual according to how their heart is turned. Thus, when we turn to examine the above passages in light of forgiveness, it is clear that our failing to forgive is a direct reflection of what is in our hearts. We cannot blame the other person as we, even as they, are commanded to 'love our neighbor as ourselves' irrespective of how they behave toward us. In failing to do so, we cannot legitimately use the excuse of 'look how they treated me' and be justified. Instead, what we are shown by the LORD God is that, in our heart, we have no desire to forgive at all, and will use any excuse that readily comes to hand to justify the failure to forgive. This state of heart and mind is invalidated as the commandment does not state 'love your neighbor as your neighbor loves you.' Rather, the issue of your neighbor and his or her heart and mind, have no bearing on the what the LORD requires of each of us, individually. The burden placed upon your neighbor is exactly the same burden placed upon you – that is: **love your neighbor**

**as yourself.** None of us, not myself, not you, nor your neighbor are free to use the excuse of 'look how they treated me' and be justified.

**"With what measure ye mete..."**

Here we arrive at the point of understanding consequence for action in relation to our failure to forgive. Naturally, as it is an issue of our relations with our fellow man, it falls under the umbrella of the second commandment. As we are commanded to love our fellow man as ourselves, so also, logically, howsoever we wish to be treated is how we will treat our fellow man. Even so, the LORD declares this to be the case:

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. (*Matthew 7:2*)

And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. (*Mark 4:24*)

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. (*Luke 6:38*)

We must be careful here. Whatsoever you or I choose to levy upon another, we also call upon ourselves. It does not take much consideration to determine that the foundation of the above principle is the second commandment:

*"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."*

We should understand that if the commandment states that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, then whatsoever we impose upon our neighbor, we are implicitly declaring we desire to have imposed upon our person. Hence, if we wish a

world in which no one is held in account for their wickedness, then be permissive. If we wish to live in a harsh and unyielding society, then behave that way toward our fellow man. If we wish to live in a world of liars and thieves, then lie and steal. Thus, it should not be difficult to perceive that we are the drivers of the type of society we wish to live in. In sum, to paraphrase an old saying 'We make our bed, and we have to lie in it.' This the LORD God will certainly render to us, so that we may see what people we are, and perceive wherein we have erred.

But there is yet another aspect of this we have not considered heretofore:

But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the *one* cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not *to take thy* coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask *them* not again. **And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.** For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend *to them* of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: **for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.** (Luke 6:27-36)

Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? **Therefore all**

**things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.**  
(*Matthew 7:9-12*)

Here is where man fails to reach consistently: We are barely able to forgive those we claim to love, and the LORD God has set forth a standard that states we will not only forgive those we love, but are to treat those who hate us and are our enemies as we would like to be treated. That this is the case is without doubt, as the statement "And as ye would that **men** should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." leaves no room for any other interpretation. The use of the term "*men*" clearly means anyone of the race of man: friend or enemy, rich or poor, small or great. We are to treat everyone as we would like to be treated, utterly without regard to any factor or condition at all.

At this point it would seem almost superfluous to add to the above, but the LORD deems it necessary that we understand the full extent of the commandment and its relationship to the issue at hand, which is our relationship with the LORD versus our relationship with our fellow man, and who it is we transgress against. In light of this, we should note who pronounces our judgment for our misdeeds toward our fellow man. The following passage is instructive, as it addresses the issue of the slothful servant and his stewardship with the talent given him by his lord:

**And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee,** *thou* wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? (*Luke 19:22-23*)

"Love thy neighbor as thyself" and "as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" and "with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" clearly

yield "out of thine own mouth will I judge thee..." It is not our fellow man that pronounces what judgment we wish to be judged with, but the LORD God rendering unto us our wishes and desires. The servant, by his actions and justification of those actions, declared to his lord what he would have done to him. The servant knew his lord expected return on investment, and yet the servant deliberately hid and did nothing with the responsibility delivered to him. So as the servant rendered no good to his lord, his lord will render no good to the servant. After all, the servant asked for it.

So that there is no mistake in this, this same principle is repeated to the spiritual leadership of Israel by the Lord Jesus Christ:

But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast *him* out of the vineyard, and slew *him*. **When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out *his* vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.** Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? **Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.** (*Matthew 21:37-43*)

Notice who pronounces the judgment which is rendered: "**They say unto him**, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons." To which the Lord replied: "**Therefore say I unto you**, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." thus confirming that He chooses to deal with

man in such a way as to allow we ourselves to become our own judges. If we judge unjustly, we reap the fruits of that back on our own head. Thus, what happens to us is of our own making, even though it seems that this is not the case. However, if we bother to accurately examine the entirety of any situation, we would see that what comes on us is actually how we are. The only reason we cannot see it is our willful blindness to our own heart and motives for the things we think and do.

However complete the above may seem with regard to the issue of who we sin against, the LORD God adds a final point of argument to demonstrate to us where we stand in the matter:

*It is a point of law that the one who suffers the offense is the one who has standing to take action before the court.*

This point has clear support in Scripture, as any examination of the laws and judgments given to Israel show. Moreover, this is easily understandable and logical, and virtually no one has argument with this. To argue this point is to take that which is not rightfully ours and usurp the place of another. However, man being the fallen creature that he is, has difficulty restraining himself to be bound by this principle. In case we doubt, a study of how World War I started suffices. But whether we agree or not, it remains that the LORD God clearly and plainly removes retribution out of our hands. So that we may understand without question, the following verses are express:

**Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me:** I will render to the man according to his work. (*Proverbs 24:29*)

**Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves,** but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, **Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.** (*Romans 12:19*)

Here we are plainly admonished that the taking of vengeance is

not our place. The reason for this is quite clear: It is not our commandment and law that they violate when you or I are assaulted, but the LORD's commandment of "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Thus, we are given no part or parcel in repaying another for the transgression they commit against us, as it is not really us they are transgressing against, but the LORD God. For our understanding, the LORD gave the apostle James to deliver the following:

Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of *his* brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. **There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy:** who art thou that judgest another? (*James 4:11-12*)

Despite what the above passage seems to say in isolation ((It is ludicrous to suggest that we not judge. A brief but unbiased study of the Scripture demonstrates that the ability to judge is intrinsic to man and we cannot help but judge.)), we are not precluded from rendering judgment, but from rendering judgment apart from the commandment. In short, we are not to render judgment according to our dictates, but according to the judgments of the LORD God as instructed by the Lord Jesus Christ:

Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day? **Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.** (*John 7:22-24*)

And again:

I can of mine own self do nothing: **as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the**

will of the Father which hath sent me. (John 5:30)

Accordingly, we are admonished of two specific precepts which we must understand and hold:

1. Without exception, there is no other lawgiver than the LORD God.
2. We are never to judge by our own standards and understanding, but wholly look to the LORD God and His word for what judgment ought to be.

To do otherwise is to usurp the position and authority of the LORD God and step out of our place. The clear result of that behavior is nothing less than condemnation.

The Scriptural Case Against Abortion – Table of Contents –	Appendix F: Against Thee, Thee Only Have I Sinned – Table of Contents –	Conclusion
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