

INTRODUCTION

In Part 1 ([Forgiveness under the law of Moses](#)), the minister of coC UNILAG did an excellent exposition of forgiveness amongst men or within human relationships as governed by the law the LORD gave unto Israel. This lesson examines the concept of forgiveness under the New Testament.

Definitions

- **Forgiveness** – not holding an offense, wrong or hurt to heart; forgo vengeance and revoke revenge. This happens when one party decides not to recompense the violation of understanding, rule or cordial action by another in their relationship or mutual existence. It means to *pardon* and not met out deserved justice on an offender or transgressor and is a demonstration of *mercy*.
- **Law of Christ** – the doctrine or teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ as enshrined in the New Covenant. This are based on his teaching concerning the kingdom of God as well as on the inspired writings of His apostles.

While on earth, Jesus expounded the Mosaic Law and taught about the coming kingdom (church). While there are common threads between the two dispensations, Christ made distinctions whenever necessary.

THESIS - Forgiveness Modalities in Christ (With Examples)

Since men sin against God as well as against fellow men, we need forgiveness from God and as well as from man.

I. Between God and Man

Under Mosaic Law, men's sins against God were covered when they repented and offered animal sacrifices. During John the Baptist's ministry, it was via baptism of repentance (Mk 1:4). Such forgiveness was anticipatorily pronounced (Lev 4:31, Rm 4:17) due to the foreknowledge that Jesus would shed His blood to redeem all (Heb 10:4; 10-12, Gal 4:4-5).

God's principle is evident, men should accept His terms of pardon in any era:

The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. - Psalms 34:18

For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. - Isaiah 66:2

Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. - Isaiah 55:6-7

Perhaps, the punishment of Adam and Eve might have just been limited to death and not extend to cursed earth, sorrowful toiling and birth pains if they had been contrite and repentant rather than make excuses! Christ gave a foretaste of the forgiveness in His kingdom on several occasions. He had authority to forgive sins while on earth (Mt 9:2-6). He forgave the woman caught in adultery in John 8 out of mercy and also because her accusers were not true witnesses, they were sought to trap

Him not that that really cared about enforcing the law. Recall that the Lord forgave king Abimelech for trying to snatch Sarah in Gen 20. He also forgave David's adultery upon his repentance (2 Sam 12:13). Just as with David and Saul, so it happened with Peter and Judas. The repentant fellow was forgiven while the obstinate person forfeited pardon. Unfortunately, Ananias and Sapphira tried to cover their sin and were suddenly destroyed (Prov 28:13; 29:1). Swift judgment is not the norm now because of God's grace and cessation of miracles. The Lord *'is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.'*

Christ came to save all, both Jews and Gentiles (Mt 1:21, Jn 1:12-13, Rm 1:16). His law of pardon today for the alien sinner is to obey the gospel through faith, repentance, confession of divinity and immersion to partake in the likeness of His burial and resurrection –Rm 10:9-10; 6:3-6.

However, His law of pardon for an erring Christian is to repent, (confess/admit if a public sin), and to pray for forgiveness - Acts 8:22, 1 John 1:7-10.

*Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. **Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.** The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. - James 5:14-16*

II. Amongst Men

Contrast the Mosaic injunction to that of the Gospel. Forgiveness was an option under the law, state administration of justice was mandated not personal vendetta. In Christianity, forgiveness is mandated.

Matthew 5:21-26 *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.*

Matthew 6:12, 14-15 *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors... 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 18:15-22 *Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Then came Peter to him, and said, **Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.***

1 Corinthians 6:1, 5-7 *Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?*

Examples of forgiveness in the NT

a) Stephen imitated Christ by praying that God should forgive his killers.

Luke 23:33-34 *And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.*

Acts 7:59-60 *And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

- b) Paul later forgave John Mark who abandoned him in an hostile environment during a missionary work, he resumed working with Mark though he was cross and refused to initially –Acts 13:13; 15:36-40 vs 2 Timothy 4:11. Paul later spoke well of Barnabas too (1 Corinthians 9:5-6)
- c) Paul and the Corinthian church forgave the brother who was disfellowshipped for fornication -1 Corinthians 5:1-6, 12-13 vs 2 Corinthians 2:6-11
- d) Problematic homes such as an abusive marriage could end up in separation, not divorce -1 Cor 7:10-11. Estranged couples should administer prayer, counseling and forgive each other.

CONCLUSION

For man to receive forgiveness from God, man's faith now has to be in the redemptive work of Jesus wherein Christ's blood was shed to redeem all across every dispensation. Have you been reconciled to God? If not, obey the gospel today! Are you in enmity with any of the church brethren, family members, neighbours, colleagues or acquaintances? Do forgive to have peace within. Perhaps that person will amend his/her way after seeing *Christ in you!* Time helps to nurture and restore strained relationships, it is God that heals all wounds!

Romans 4:7-8 *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.*

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.*

Ephesians 4:31-32 *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.*

Colossians 3:12-15 *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. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*