

What The Bible Says About

Forgiveness & Love



Good Hope
Baptist Church

Living Together In The Love Of God

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FOCAL Read Responsively Matthew 6:14-15 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

When the Lord Jesus Christ started His earthly ministry, the very first thing He did was to be baptized in water by His earthly cousin John. Coming up out of the water, the Bible says in **Matthew 4:1** that "**Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.**"



Over a 40 day period our Lord prayed, and at the end of that period the Devil tempted Him, trying to get our Lord to do the wrong and ungodly thing. Jesus refused the Devil, saying when tempted "**It is written**". He proved by this encounter that the Devil can always be defeated as long as the followers of God *stay true to the Word of God*.

What is the Word of God? If we're going to defeat Satan and change our world, we must have the authentic Word of God. Just as the wrong prescription of eyeglasses will give you a headache and blur your vision, the wrong Word



will mislead the child of God.

The **Pharisees and Sadducees - the religious right and the religious left** of Jesus' day had the Word of God in their possession. The only problem was these misguided and sometimes evil people took the Word that they were supposed to cherish and mangled it, infusing their own customs and thoughts into what God meant. As a result people became *religious* but not *right*. Jesus would later tell the Pharisees:

Matthew 15:6-9 ^(HCSB) ... **you have revoked God's word because of your tradition. 7 Hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied correctly about you when he said: 8 These people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. 9 They worship Me in vain, teaching as doctrines the commands of men.**"

Right after dealing with Satan by "it is written" the Bible tells us that the Lord

Context Matthew 5:1 ^(KJV) ... **went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him ...**

The King of King is sat down on His Throne. It's not a golden throne in a golden palace, but Jesus didn't come to be that kind of King. He found a high place on the mountainside, and sat down.



His disciples came to Him to be taught what the True Word of God is - minus all the nonsense that the Pharisees and Sadducees had added.

The King of Kings - God in the flesh and now among us - was going to teach. The Living Word of God would speak the Living Word of God. Listen up, Children of God, for this is what God will have us to do!

1 Jesus taught that **Christianity is a relationship, not a religion.** God loves us, and invites us to walk with Him in love. But if we're going to walk with God in love, then we must love those around us.

a Jesus defined love as **DOING GOOD.** Love does not mean to have an emotional, sappy, *i wuv u* sort of feeling. **To love someone is to do good toward them.** Jesus tells us:



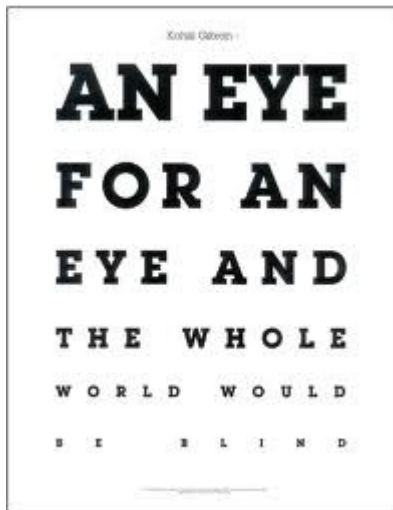
Context Matthew 5:16 ^(KJV) **Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.**

Love is light, and love is good works To do good toward others whether they deserve it or not is the Christian Way of life. Elsewhere in Jesus' "Beatitudes" or His declaration of the Word He says:

Matthew 5:38-48 ^(HCSB) **You have heard that it was**

said, **An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.** 39 **But I tell you, don't resist an evildoer. On the contrary, if anyone slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.** 40 **As for the one who wants to sue you and take away your shirt, let him have your coat as well.** 41 **And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two.** 42 **Give to the one who asks you, and don't turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.** 43 **"You have heard that it was said, Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.** 44 **But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,** 45 **so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. For He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.** 46 **For if you love those who love you, what reward will you have? Don't even the tax collectors do the same?** 47 **And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing out of the ordinary? Don't even the Gentiles do the same?** 48 **Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**

The mark of *perfection* and therefore the mark of *godliness* is that **we do not resist the evil doer.** We do not return slap for slap, or blow for blow. When God established the Old Covenant *Law of tooth and claw*, which states **"an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"**, this was not meant to be a means for self justification or self



vindication. The whole purpose of **"eye for an eye"** was to establish control over crime in ancient Israel. If you killed someone then the next of kin had the right to chase you so as to take your life. To avoid dying you would *run to a city of refuge* where your crime would be tried.



If you did indeed kill an innocent, then the Law demanded you die - but this was only after due process of Law. The Pharisees too **"eye for an eye"** and turned it into some monstrous device where any

infraction - not just the spilling of innocent blood - and made it a place where the offended could take vengeance. This is contrary to the teaching of the Scripture. **Vengeance belongs to the Lord and to the Lord only.** This was taught in both the Old Testament:

Deuteronomy 32:35 (HCSB) Vengeance belongs to Me; I will repay.

as well as the New Testament:

Romans 12:19 (HCSB) Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for His wrath. For it is written: Vengeance belongs to Me; I will repay, says the Lord.

God knew that we as humans could not carry hatred in ourselves without destroying our very souls. So He

commanded us to **forgive and love. To do good to those who do bad to us.** This and this alone is the only way to change our world.

b We **DO GOOD** to those who wrong us by **forgiving them and then by giving them something that blesses them. When we forgive, we also DO GOOD to our own souls.** God is love, and God resides inside of each and every Christian. Forgiveness is love acted out toward our enemies. Pastor & Bible Teacher **John MacArthur** said:

“Never are you more like God when you forgive. Never are you less like God than when you refuse to forgive. “

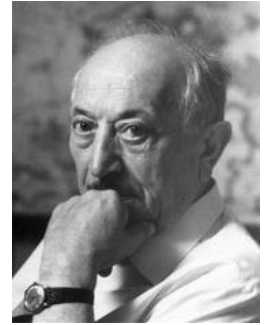


Forgiveness is what Christians DO, just as love is what we DO. We may have to do it more than once a day, and may have to do it repeatedly. But if we forgive then God promises us that peace will follow and that *He and He alone* will avenge our hurt.

Illustrate Some *nine million Jews* were murdered then buried in mass graves or burned like so much cord-wood in World World 2 German Concentration Camps. Two people - one a non-Christian and the other a Christian - deal with the German atrocities in two different ways. **Simon Wiesenthal was a Jewish prisoner in the Maudhousen Concentration Camp, Poland.**

Wiesenthal has never, to my knowledge, accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior. One day he was

assigned to clean out the hospital that was used to give medical attention to wounded German soldiers. That evening Wiesenthal had a nurse come to him, take him by the hand, and lead him to the bedside of a SS soldier who lay dying, only 21 years old. His face was covered with puss-soaked rags, his eyes hidden behind the gauze. When Wiesenthal came near the young man grabbed his hand and held on to it. He said "**I need to talk to a Jew. I want to confess my sins to a Jew before I die.**" The young man went on to explain that **he was one of many soldiers that executed Jewish men, women, and children.** He recalled that on one occasion his comrades had set a house on fire. As the Jews ran from the house he helped gun them down. Oh, **how he wanted to be forgiven.** Wiesenthal listened to the dying man's story, and then jerked his hand out of his hand. Walking away without saying a word he would not forgive that trooper. Later Wiesenthal wrote his life's story.



Wiesenthal's book ends with one question: **“What would you have done?”**

Then there was **Corrie ten Boom**, a Christian who was arrested and **sent to Nazi concentration camps for harboring and assisting the Jews.** Corrie lost her entire family - her mother, father, and sister - to the death camps. She narrowly escaped

with her life. Years later Corrie was approached by a man who had been a guard at one of those camps. This man had often humiliated her and her sister. Though he never physically raped them, he would have them remove their clothing so he could "inspect" them. The man that stood before her now was not the same man who tormented her. **He told Corrie that he was now a Christian. He apologized for the evil that he had done, and, sticking out his hand, asked if she would forgive him.** Corrie struggled within herself. *Forgive him? This man was part of the reason her family was dead.* Corrie wrote:



“I stood there with coldness clutching at my heart. I prayed, Jesus, help me! I thrust my hand into {the guard's hand} and I experienced an incredible thing. A warm reconciliation seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes. ‘I forgive you, brother,’ I cried with my whole heart. For a long moment we grasped each others hands, the former guard, the former prisoner. I have never known the love of God so intensely as I did in that moment.”

We hurt ourselves and drive God far away from our lives when we will not forgive.

As Jesus hung on the Cross



dying He cried out, **"Father forgive them, for they know not what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).** We must do as Jesus commands and forgive.

2 My relationship with God demands that I forgive.

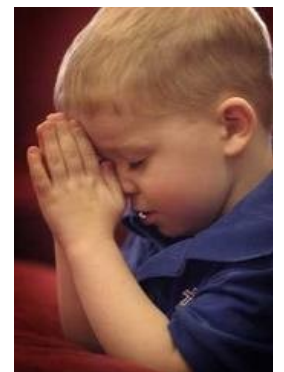
When we read the Scripture, it is good to watch every little word carefully. For instance, our focal text begins with the word **"for"**.

Focal Matthew 6:14 **For** if ye forgive men their trespasses...

Word Study Note that the first word in our text is **"for"** (*gar* pronounced *gar*), which is a Primary Particle used in an argument. You could translate it as **"for this reason"**.

Now when you read **"for this reason"** in a sentence what you want to do is *look backward into the context.* For *what* reason? Look at your context:

Context Matthew 6:9-13 **After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. [10] Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. [11] Give us this day our daily bread. [12] And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. [13] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.**



What is immediately before this "**for this reason**" is the **reason we need to forgive**. Jesus had just finished giving His disciples a model for prayer. If you remember that last week we learned that the disciples came to Jesus and said "Please teach us how to pray". Jesus taught them how to pray in what we call **the Lord's Prayer**. If you remember the prayer **asked that God's Name be hallowed, and that His Kingdom and Will be done both here and on the earth**. Only after praying these things are we to ask for **our daily bread** as well as **forgiveness for our sins**. Notice how Jesus addressed forgiveness:

forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors

Word Study That word "**debt**" is the Greek **OPHEILEMA** (*οφειλημα* pronounced *of-i'-lay-mah*), which literally means "that which is owed someone, is due someone, a debt".

The idea is that we *all owe somebody something*. We have all offended at one time or another. We have all disrespected someone, or have taken something from someone, or have injured someone. You might say "but I've not injured anybody that I know of". May I ask this. **What about God?**

a God has forgiven us, so we must forgive others.

That's what the text is talking about. Jesus said that as we pray we should ask God to "**forgive us our debt**". We owe God. If you are a Christian God has forgiven and *continues to forgive* your breaches and sins against Him.

Sins against God are *eternal*. If God can forgive your *eternal* sins against Him then you should have enough grace within you to forgive the *temporary* sins that people commit against you.

When you read the clear text of our focal verse it very plainly states "**if you will not forgive others, God will not forgive you**".

FOCAL Matthew 6:14-15 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.



The Lord wants His people to understand that "**just as God has forgiven you - for Christ's sake - offenses against His Person, He expects YOU to forgive others when THEY offend against YOUR PERSON. If you are a Christian you represent Christ. You must forgive!**"

Unbelievers are going to offend us. Note that Jesus uses the word "**men**" in our focal text. "**If you forgive not MEN**". People are going to hate Christians, especially if we are the Christians that are genuine and not fake. The world doesn't hate the *fake Christian*. The fake, the *pretend believer* is no threat to Satan nor his minions. The world will hate the genuine Christian for he or she will be like Christ - even when offended.

John 15:18-19 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. [19] If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

You who are Christians don't belong to the world. You belong to God. What does the Lord expect you to do? Forgive them.

b Forgiveness in my heart toward the offender is proof that I am indeed a Child of God. Looking at our focal text again we read:

FOCAL Matthew 6:14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you ...

He is “**Father**” to me when I let Him work through me and forgive!

Word Study The Greek word for “**forgive**” is APHEIMI (αφημι), which means “**to release, to send away, to let go**”. When we forgive we **let go of our anger and our desire to avenge ourselves**, and cast that burden on God. We let God – the Judge of all – balance the scales. **He will repay, says the Lord.**

Illustrate On March 8, 2009 Pastor Fred Winters of First Baptist Church of Maryville was shot to death by 27-year-old Terry Sedlacek during their worship

service. The bullet from the gunman's .45 hit the Bible the Pastor was preaching from. The Bible exploded, turning Sacred Scripture into confetti. The bullet then pierced the Pastor's heart. **Fred's wife Cindy said** at his funeral,



“I am not going to hate. I am going to survive this thing. I hope the man who did this learns to love Jesus.”

In the movie **Amish Grace** a father of a slain child said to his remaining daughter, “**Hatred is a big thing with many sharp teeth. It will destroy your heart if you let it.**” If we are children of God, forgiven by God, then we must forgive others.

Forgiveness doesn't mean that you *deny* the other person hurt you. It doesn't mean that the person who hurt you isn't responsible. Forgiveness never minimizes or justifies the wrong that was done to you. You are not excusing the act. What you are doing is *releasing* your anger and your desire for vengeance to God – as many times as you must until it is gone.

C You cannot combat evil with evil. If you wrestle with a pig in the mud, you will get muddy! You can only combat evil with good. You can only defeat evil by

doing good and loving those who insist on being your enemies. The Apostle Paul said:

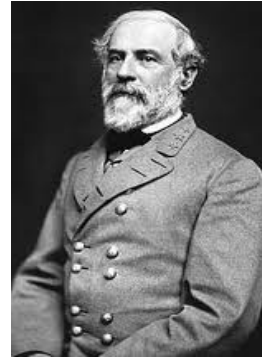
Romans 12:20-21 ... if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. (21) Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.



Illustrate I saw a movie once - I cannot remember the title – but it perfectly illustrated this point. At the beginning of the movie a clean cut, nice looking businessman with a high paying job has a son who is killed. Rather than give place to vengeance, he decides to take revenge. At the end of the movie the man – now with shaved head and scarred face – is now just like those he pursued. When he meets the man who killed his son, just before he avenges the boy the killer looks at the ex-businessman and says, **“Why, look at you! You're just like me.”**

When we combat evil with evil we will be overcome. We will **be just like the evil**. God does not want that of us. He wants us to be light in this fallen world. He wants us to be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

3 **As Christians we need to grow closer to Christ and lead others to Christ. We cannot do this while we wallow in past offenses.**



Illustrate Following the Civil War **General Robert E Lee** – himself a Christian - visited a home of someone he knew in Kentucky. The lady of the house pointed to a limbless, battered tree trunk standing on the front lawn, and said, **“Before the Union army came through here, that was a beautiful, magnificent magnolia tree. Look at what their artillery fire did to my tree. What do you think about that ?”** The General looked at the lady and said, **“My dear, I think you should cut it down and forget it”.**

I have heard people recite offenses that others have committed against them *long after the offender was dead*. Do you really relish giving someone that much control over your life. Live for Jesus. Live like Jesus.

The Apostle Paul – beaten and bruised for his faith, falsely imprisoned and on his way to a Roman execution, wrote his disciple Timothy

1 Timothy 1:15 ^(HCSB) Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — and I am the worst of them.

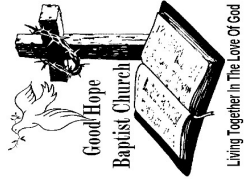
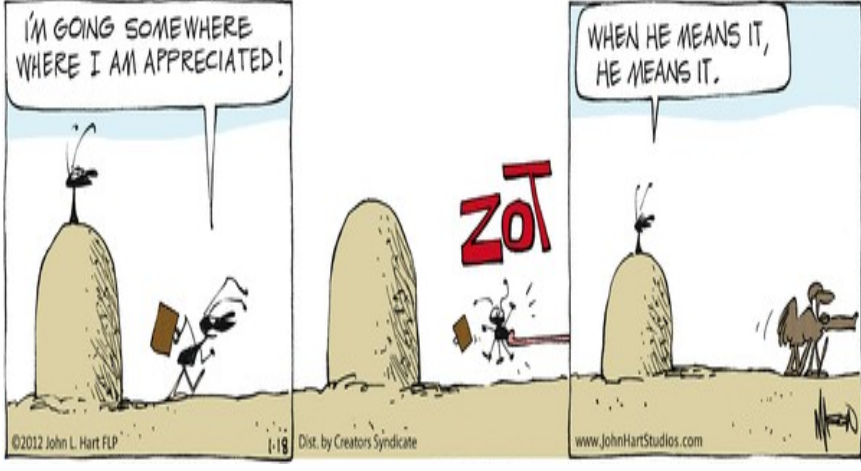
That's what our mission is, to bring others to Christ. If the Apostle Paul, good man that he was, considered himself **the worst of sinners** – then we need to apply that to ourselves. All of us are sinners.

All of us have offended God. All of us have been offended by men. Just as God forgave us, so must we forgive. Our goal is not to show ourselves right, but to show the righteousness of God that is only available by faith in Christ Jesus.

We are to be focused as Christians on doing good, on loving others, on serving God. Anything else is a waste of the life that God has given us.

May God touch your hearts with His Word.





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