

23rd December 2018

Forgiveness Pt 1 The essence of forgiveness

This is the start of a new topic on “forgiveness”. We will establish that (1) in relation to God forgiveness means – sins are covered and not remembered, (2) for Israel forgiveness did not mean they were cleared of guilt, (3) in relation to brethren – forgiveness means – comfort and letting go such that Satan does not get an advantage over us, and forgiveness includes repentance.

The Greek word that is translated “forgiveness” is also translated – remission, liberty and deliverance. And the Greek words that are translated “forgive” are also translated – put away, remit, land let go. When we turn to the Hebrew word that is translated “forgiveness” we establish that it is also translated pardon. When we turn to the Oxford dictionary we see that “forgiveness” means – “remit” and “pardon”.

Scriptures upon which this teaching is founded.

1. In relation to God, forgiveness means –

i) sins are covered.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered” (Ps.32: 1). See also Rom.4: 7.

ii) sin is no longer remembered.

“Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer.31: 34).

2. For Israel forgiveness did not mean that they were cleared of their guilt.

“Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation” (Ex.34: 7). See also Num 14:18,19.

3. In relation to brethren –

i) Forgiveness means – comfort and letting go so that Satan does not get an advantage over us.

“To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave [it], for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices “ (2Cor 2:10 & 11).

ii) Forgiveness includes repentance.

“Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. 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” (Lk.17: 3 & 4).

An illustration to help apply the teaching to our life today.

I remember a discussion with a family member on forgiveness, and they could not articulate a meaning of the word. It left me with an indelible memory of our discussion.

Question to think about.

How can anyone not understand what it means to forgive someone?

Our answer from the scriptures.

“Therefore...by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom 3:20). “When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws” (Ex.18: 16).

For the heathen who often do not believe in God there can never be biblical forgiveness – because for forgiveness to take place – the sinner must accept their iniquity (wrong doing), and for that there has to be law that sets out right and wrong, and for there to be a law there has to be a God who is holy, righteous and just. Therefore, for those who say in their heart there is no God (Ps.14: 1), there is no law of God, there is no need to repent nor ask for forgiveness, nor forgive another. Therefore for the heathen there is no understanding of what it means to forgive someone.