

CHRISTIAN FORGIVENESS

BIBLE TEXT : Matthew 5:23, 24, 43-48; 18:15, 21, 22; Mark 11:23-26; Romans 12:9,10,14,17,19-21.

LESSON 272 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: : "If ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:26). .

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Matthew 5:23-24

²³ Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;
²⁴ Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Matthew 5:43-48

⁴³ Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.
⁴⁴ But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;
⁴⁵ That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.
⁴⁶ For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?
⁴⁷ And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so?
⁴⁸ Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Matthew 18:15

¹⁵ 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.

Matthew 18:21-22

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Love for Enemies

This lesson is taken from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Among the things Jesus talked about were Christian love and forgiveness. Jesus taught that a Christian has forgiveness in his heart. From this we know that if one does not have forgiveness in his heart, he is not a Christian.

The Jewish teachers told the people to love their neighbours and to hate their enemies. That is the human way to do, but it is not God's way. In the Old Testament we read: "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:18). There were certain Canaanites who hindered the Children of Israel and who tried to draw them away from God, and, concerning these certain people, God said that the Children of Israel should "not seek their peace nor their prosperity" (Deuteronomy 23:6). Perhaps, from these words the Jewish teachers drew their idea to hate all their enemies.

Jesus taught that those who are children of God — true Christians — have a love for their enemies. A Christian has no love for sin and evil ways ([Psalm 97:10](#) ¹⁰ Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.) but he has a love for the souls of men, even his enemies. Jesus said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:44, 45).

To those who may be considered enemies, we are forbidden to do any harm. From Paul's writings to the Romans, we read, "Recompense to no man evil for evil" (Romans 12:17). To the Thessalonians Paul wrote, "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men" (I Thessalonians 5:15). It is not for us to bring punishment to men for their evil deeds. God will judge all men and will pronounce their proper sentence. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19). The Lord said in another place, "To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste" (Deuteronomy 32:35).

Good for Evil

Jesus taught that Christians return good for evil ([Luke 6:27](#) ²⁷ But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you). They do not have a spirit which would repay evil with evil. The worst of sinners may love those who love them. There is nothing uncommon or extraordinary about such actions. To follow the Lord's example, a Christian will do more than others do — he will love those who hate him and will repay evil with good. The Lord requires this of Christian children as well as of Christian adults.

²¹ Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?
²² Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Mark 11:23-26

²³ For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.
²⁴ Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*.
²⁵ 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.
²⁶ But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Romans 2:9-10

⁹ Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;
¹⁰ But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

Romans 2:14

¹⁴ For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

Romans 2:17

¹⁷ Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,

In your class at school or among the children who live near you, there may be a child who mistreats you and speaks falsely against you. How can you do him good for the evil he has done to you? You can pray for him — Jesus prayed for God to forgive even those who had crucified Him (Luke 23:34). You can be kind to the one who is unkind to you; you can even give him something, or lend him something, that he needs. You can show your love to him by speaking of some good things that he does, and by choosing him when you play.

To return good for some evil done to you may seem like a hard thing to do, but if you have the love of God in your heart you will want to do that. If you find that it is not so easy to love your enemy, pray that God will give you grace to return good for evil.

By being kind to those who are unkind to you, they will be condemned and ashamed of themselves. You may win them for friends for yourself and believers for the Lord. We are instructed, "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" (Romans 12:20).

Christian Love

Jesus puts a great deal of stress on love among His followers. On one occasion Jesus said, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12). That Christian love is a wonderful thing. It binds the children of the Lord together. One must be careful that the love for God's people is kept in his heart. One must guard against letting anything come between him and another person. There are times when one must be especially humble and lowly in order to keep that true love.

If Satan can put something in your heart against one of God's people, then he has won a great victory. The sooner you go to that brother or sister in the Gospel and settle the question between you, the sooner Satan will flee, and that Christian love will bring you closer to the people of God.

Reconciled

Jesus knew that Satan would try to separate the people of the Lord by misunderstandings and offences. Jesus gave us instructions as to what we should do in order to overcome those things: "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" (Matthew 5:23, 24).

If, while you are praying, it comes to your mind that a brother has something against you, go to that person, talk the matter over, and be reconciled to him before you return to the altar to offer God the gift of praise and consecration. The Lord is not pleased with a form of religion when in the heart there is not a love for one's fellow men. More than one Christian has left the altar, has gone to one of the brethren to talk over a wrong, has been reconciled, and has returned to the altar to receive a blessing from the Lord.

Notice that in Jesus' teaching it is not mentioned which person is at fault or how serious the matter may be. If you are wrong or the other person is, if the matter is serious or seemingly of little weight, if there is a misunderstanding or if no one is particularly wrong, the Lord has given the same rule whereby we must abide.

A Clear Conscience

Romans 2:19-21

¹⁹ And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,
²⁰ An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law?
²¹ Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

There are different things, which may cause a bad feeling to come between the Lord's children. Often it may be a misunderstanding — when the wrong impression was given and no harm was intended — but the appearance of evil was there to hurt and to offend the other person. There have been times when the other person knew only half the story, and when he was told the true circumstances the matter was different, and there was no cause for hard feelings.

Sometimes an accident happens through misfortune or carelessness. Have you ever broken a window? No doubt Satan tried to tell you to run or to say that another person did it. If you went to the owner, admitting your accident and paying for the damage done, you know how good you felt that you were clear before others even though you were sorry about it. If you tried to hide, you know how guilty you felt, how restless you were, and how you were afraid that you would be caught. Does it not pay to do the right thing and have a clear conscience before God and one's fellow men?

It is possible for Satan, by trickery, by lying, or by temptation, to get you to do wrong, especially if you have not been praying very much. At such a time you may hurt one of the brethren by listening to Satan. Perhaps without knowing why, or without realising the seriousness of it, or without thinking, or doing it intentionally, a wrong is committed and someone has been harmed by it. These things do happen. Although we are sorry about them, let us make them right immediately and not let them continue to mar our Christian love and our Christian life.

May we be reminded of the Bible teaching on restitution that we studies in Lesson 269. In order to keep that Christian love in one's heart and to belong to the family of God, one must, when he is wrong, humble himself and confess his fault, beg another's pardon, make restitution, and offer a satisfaction for the wrong done.

Some people are willing to admit their faults to God, and to ask His forgiveness; but the Bible teaches that one must also make reconciliation with his fellow men. One cannot be right in God's sight when he does not even try to make things right with man. One should not put off making right a wrong, because until that is done one cannot have God's favour to the fullest extent. While he is postponing the reconciliation, Jesus may come. And do you think such a one would be ready to meet the Lord?

A Forgiving Spirit

What does one do if he is the person who has been wronged and hurt? Does he spread gossip by telling others that he is wronged, and tell what mischief another has done to him? The Bible teaches us to go to the one who has trespassed against us, tell him about his fault, and try to make reconciliation. If the matter is not satisfactorily adjusted, a witness can go with us and help to work out the problem. (**Matthew 18:15-17** ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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.) How reasonable it is to obey the Lord's teachings rather than to let strife grow between the brethren!

An Unlimited Number

One time Peter asked the Lord how many times he should

forgive a brother who had sinned against him. Peter thought maybe seven different times would be a lot to forgive a person, but seven times in a lifetime or seven times in one day are not enough. Jesus answered, "Until seventy times seven" (**Matthew 18:21-22** ²¹Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? ²²Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven). What is seventy times seven? It is 490 times. Certainly one would need the love of God and much patience in his heart to forgive when the same person wronged him so many times. The Lord expects forgiveness; He demands it; and He gives power and grace to a Christian to have such love and forgiveness in his heart. Jesus meant that there is no limit to a Christian's forgiveness.

As We Forgive Others

Forgiveness is a wonderful thing, but it is also a serious thing. People who say they can never forgive another person are on dangerous ground. Those who pray the Lord's prayer (**Matthew 6:9-13** ⁹After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. ¹⁰Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us this day our daily bread. ¹²And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.) say, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." They pray to be forgiven in the same manner that they forgive. When they do not forgive others, they cannot expect God to forgive them. "If ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:26).

If you want the Lord to hear and answer your prayer, and to forgive you, you too must "forgive, if ye have ought against any" (Mark 11:25). It is noted that Jesus did not say that we should forgive others only when they **ask** to be forgiven. Forgiveness is in the heart of a true Christian whether forgiveness is asked or not. Our salvation may depend upon our forgiving others.

Even though the trespass is very serious, to the loss of a life or of an arm, to the loss of one's family or one's property, or damage to one's reputation or health — no matter what the cost — he must forgive if he expects mercy from God. A good tract to read in connection with this lesson is one published by the Apostolic Faith entitled, "For Another's Crime."

To Forgive and Forget

What does it mean to forgive? It means to excuse and pardon. Along with forgiving is forgetting. To forgive is to forget. There are no degrees of forgiveness. One cannot be forgiven in part or in a small measure. One is either really forgiven or he is unforgiven — one or the other.

When the Lord forgives, He remembers the sin no more (**Hebrews 8:12** ¹²For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. **Hebrews 10:17** ¹⁷And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. **Jeremiah 31:34** ³⁴And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 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.). He removes our transgressions "as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12). So great is His pardon that He casts our "sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). Hezekiah said, concerning the Lord, "Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back" (Isaiah 38:17). The Bible tells us that "even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye"

(Colossians 3:13). When a person really forgives, he does so in spirit and conduct as well as with the lips. He forgives with the heart and in true Christian love.

QUESTIONS

1. How does a Christian treat an enemy?
2. Who is your enemy?
3. Who is your neighbour?
4. What does a Christian return for evil done to him?
5. What does it mean to "heap coals of fire on his head"?
6. What commandment did Jesus give His followers in John 15:12?
7. If a person has anything against you, what did Jesus say for you to do?
8. What will happen if you will not forgive another person?
9. What happens to our sins when Jesus forgives us?
10. How do you know when you are truly forgiven?