

*There Is No Limit
to God's Forgiveness*

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

What makes a Christian “great”? David was a man who committed some great sins, and yet he recognized that only one thing made him great. In Psalm 18, he spoke about a very unusual subject: God’s gentleness and power working in our lives. If we understand this, then we will do away with our grudges and sins of the tongue.

All of us are sinners. We all come short of the glory of God. God forbid that we would ever promote lasciviousness by teaching a message that turns the grace of God into a license for willful sin. Those who do, profess to know God but in their works deny Him (see Jude 4 and Titus 1:16). They live as though continuing in sin causes grace to abound, and that is wrong.

The marvelous and glorious truth is that God’s gentleness is what makes us great. This booklet will show that heaven measures greatness by our ability to reveal God’s unlimited

grace and mercy even to those who continually hurt us. That greatness reveals in us God's forgiveness that forgets. Furthermore, it reveals how God lifts up those who fail.

Chapter One

A READINESS TO FORGIVE

“Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great” (Psalm 18:35).

David knew it was God’s gentleness that made him great. He practiced this principle in relating to others. He would not reach out his hand to touch God’s anointed king, the guilty Saul. He refused to take up greatness on his own. Only God would make him great.

Think of God coming up to you and saying, “You are great. My gentleness has made you great.” How does God do it? He works in us through the Holy Spirit who produces God’s fruit in us, which is love. Out of God’s perfect love comes joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, faithfulness, and temperance: the eight results of God’s love toward us. God works in us because of His royal law of love and

forgiveness toward us.

God deals with His children based on love and forgiveness because of what Christ did on the Cross. As believers, we are part of His family now. That does not mean, however, that God will ignore sin in our lives. In perfect love, He will discipline us to produce peaceable fruits of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11).

Keeping It in the Family

“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

“But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

“Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

“For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

“Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

“And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed” (Hebrews 12:7-13).

“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 18:15).

“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” (Matthew 18:21-22).

There are many reasons for which God could discipline the believer, but He only disciplines with one thing in mind. His entire purpose is to gain someone back into a right relationship with God and His Word. Likewise, when we extend forgiveness to a brother, we gain him back.

Peter really thought he was something. “I am doing pretty well, Lord,” he said in so many words. “I gave up my fishing business to follow you. Now, let’s talk about something. I think it will bless you, Jesus. Are you ready? I can for-

give someone seven times—for the same thing, and in the same day!”

Jesus was not impressed. The beautiful thing He declared, with an idiom of speech, is that we should forgive seventy times seven. This idiom is an expression for unlimited forgiveness. Peter, like many Christians, placed a limit on forgiveness. Jesus erased that terrible misunderstanding of His Word and said, “There is no limit to forgiveness.”

Divine Discipline

Yes, there is discipline. There is an order and procedure to follow in gaining back a brother. First we have to learn the meaning of the Hebrew word *calach*, which is “to forgive.” The word appears in 1 Kings 8:30: “And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive.” *Calach* speaks of God being ready to forgive at all times.

The verb tense indicates the timelessness of the character of forgiveness. If I hear that someone has sinned against me, I must be ready to forgive him instantly, the moment something happens. Beyond having an attitude of readi-

ness, I ought to be ready to bear the burden for that one, ready to go and build him up.

The first mention of the word “forgive” occurs in Genesis 50:17. Joseph, sold into slavery by his brothers, became a burden bearer for his brothers. Only Jesus can *remove* the burden of our sins, but Joseph, rather than pursuing vengeance and punishment, *carried* the burden of his brothers’ failing. God had put him in a place to save Jacob and his family. In fact, the nation of Israel would spring from Joseph’s family.

God desires that we would be so filled with His nature that compassion would erase all anger instantly. Compassion should be running out of us, to the point where we are willing to bear the burden of those who hurt us. A person who lives in the viewpoint of divine forgiveness will pray, “God, please go easy on this one. I hold nothing against him. Lord, forgive him.”

Chapter Two

FORGIVE AS CHRIST
FORGAVE YOU

“...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 4:7-8).

When I walk in forgiveness, I am ready to forgive you even before you sin against me. When I do this, I am walking in something that makes my spiritual life great with God.

Gentleness, greatness, and forgiveness all go together. If we live in the gentleness of the Holy Spirit, we are great, and with this greatness, we forgive. Think of it. The Father has given all power to Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18). With that power, He bore our sins and did away with sin's power.

The great purpose of the Father's plan of Redemption was to bear our sins and to do away with them. By shedding His blood, Jesus Christ,

who knew no sin, became sin for us. We have been forgiven, and sin is no longer the issue. All that remains is for us to receive, and extend, this most precious gift.

As Far as the East Is from the West

The Greek text of Romans 4:7-8 indicates that when you confess your sin, you are completely restored to experience your position, just as you did before you sinned. More than that, the original text reveals that there can be no charge against you because Jesus removes the guilt. If there is anything wrong, He will not condemn you; rather, He will bear the burden with you.

If I happen to know about something wrong that someone did, I am to be a burden bearer for him.

“I remember what that person did to me eight years ago,” you may say. But Jesus does not remember.

Perhaps you have heard someone say, “I really could tell you some things about him.”

But Jesus could not. He removed every sin from us, as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12).

Now, this is an amazing lesson in divine

geography. East and west never meet. On this planet, you can go north to the North Pole and then you have to start going south. North does meet south. However, east never meets west. If you start walking eastward, you will just keep going east, forever.

Dealing with Debts: Ours and Others'

"Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

"And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

"But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

"The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

"Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

"But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and

took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

“And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

“And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

“So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

“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 18:23-35).

The first servant in this parable owed his master an amount that by today’s standards equaled approximately twenty-five million dollars. To settle the debt, his master was about to

sell him into slavery, along with his wife and children. Yet, when he fell down and asked for mercy, the king had compassion and forgave the debt.

“Your debt—all of it—is canceled forever,” the king said to him.

“Really? It’s gone?”

“Yes, it’s gone. You owe nothing.”

In this parable, Jesus was teaching us that though we commit a multitude of sins, He comes to us and says, “Every penalty is dismissed, because I died for it all.”

Looking at the rest of this story, the same servant who had been forgiven such a large debt grabbed the neck of a fellowservant who owed him a few dollars and demanded payment. The fellowservant asked for time and patience, but he refused and had him put in jail.

Word got back to the king, and he was extremely angry when he found out what had happened. The servant who had been forgiven twenty-five million dollars was turned over to the “tormentors”—a debtors’ workhouse that included tortures.

Some of us do the same thing. Christ has forgiven us so much, but often we will not forgive even the little things that have been done to us.

This only opens us to torment in our emotional and spiritual lives. Yes, it is true that all of our sins were forgiven at Calvary. Still, we are commanded to forgive others as Christ forgave us (Ephesians 4:32). If we choose not to allow Him to show forgiveness through us, then He must discipline us.

If God were to mark iniquity, not one of us could stand. So wrote David in Psalm 130. Not a person in the universe could stand before the Lord. But blessed are those whose sins are forgiven and who have no iniquity, because the Lord cannot impute sin. He placed every one of our sins upon the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world.

Chapter Three

GRACE IN ACTION
EXALTS MERCY

“And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him” (Isaiah 30:18).

“And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

“They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

“Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

“This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

“So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is

without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

“And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

“And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

“When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

“She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (John 8:3-11).

God is so gracious. He waits to give us mercy. He is ever ready to forgive so that His mercy may be exalted. Consider the amazing story, in John 8, of the woman taken in adultery. This is not a parable or a clever illustration; it is a real event. In full view of the Pharisees and all the others who were there, Jesus was putting what He taught into action.

The Lord Jesus, in effect, said to this woman, “I know the guilt that you are going through. I have already forgiven your sins. I have canceled

every debt that you owe. Now go, and sin no more.”

God does not want us to continue to practice sin. But if we do sin and then turn to Him for forgiveness, He is faithful and just to forgive us *and* to make us clean (1 John 1:9).

Some will continue in sin, and their behavior does have consequences. Fellowship with Him and with the Body of Christ is hindered. God will discipline and chastise individuals, but He does it all in love. His purpose is to draw us back into a right relationship with Him and with His Word.

Like the woman in John 8, when we have sinned, we need to take hold of the grace that motivates us and gives us power. If we repent, God forgives us and looks at us as though we had never sinned. Instead of taking two steps back, we are fully restored to our position as it was before we sinned. We go forward just as if we had never committed a single sin.

Extending the Provisions of Our Position

“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:24-25).

As Christians, we stand in the positional truth that we are saved forever, and we have been washed in the Blood of the Lamb. This needs to be our frame of reference in our thinking. Our confession, our language, and our relationships should all relate to our position. If a brother fails, we must be ready to forgive and to pray that he will repent so he can be set free too. We must let grace be the teacher and not guilt.

Aphiemi is a Greek word that means “forgiving.” It appears 174 times in the New Testament, and it speaks of removing the guilt from us. Christ removes guilt from us so that we don’t have to live in secret projections, and He sets us free indeed. More than that, He bears our burdens and ever lives to make intercession for us. He takes us out of the depths of sin and sets our feet upon the Rock (Psalm 40:2). The great picture here is that once He forgives, He really forgives and forgets, and He never places us on probation.

Satan despises that. The devil absolutely hates Matthew 20, where the Lord declared that the servant who worked one hour got the same reward as the one who worked the entire day. Satan hates this because he works hard to produce guilt and condemnation. He does every-

thing he can to interfere with Christians continuing in the holiness and righteousness of Christ and the Finished Work.

“And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

“Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.

“And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment” (Zechariah 3:2-4).

In Zechariah 3, the devil approached the throne of God to accuse Joshua, the high priest, who stood before the Lord. “I would like to go over the record of the high priest. It seems to me that there are some particular sins that should be of interest. Just look at this record!”

Christ rebuked Satan on the spot. “Be quiet and get out of here! This is a family matter.”

Right there, God removed Joshua’s sins from him and clothed him with eternal righteousness. He was placed into an eternal position of being forgiven and free forever.

This is how God looks at everyone who has received forgiveness through His Son, Jesus. Therefore, this ought to be our viewpoint toward others, as well as ourselves: Forgiven and free, forever.

CONCLUSION

What is it that makes us great? God's gentleness. And what does gentleness produce? Forgiveness.

Jesus said, "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven" (see Luke 6:37). That is a command. He commands us to forgive and swears to us that we are forgiven through His great grace.

Let me ask you a question. If God has cast our sins into the deepest sea (Micah 7:19), can we dredge them up again? No! He puts up a great, big eternal sign that declares, "No trespassing." We cannot enter the place where our sins are buried. He dismissed them. They are forgiven, forgotten, and gone—forever!

Jeremiah 50:20 says that some will seek the iniquity of Jacob and it shall not be found. The sins of Judah shall never be located, because God has put them away. He has removed them far from us, as far as east is from west.

That is God's amazing plan. This is His gen-

tleness making us great, producing forgiveness in us that covers, edifies, and restores—and never destroys. God’s gentleness brings greatness to everyone who forgives and forgets as He forgives and forgets.

The Blood of Jesus Christ has taken away our iniquities. He paid for them Himself, and now He stands ready to open the windows of heaven (Malachi 3:10) and to pour down answers to prayer and blessings forever.