

# A Cup Overflowing – A study of the Christian life

Lesson 4:

A Christian Life is...

*A Forgiveness-filled Life*

# Forgiveness

- What is forgiveness?
  - The *Revell Bible Dictionary* lists 3 definitions:
    - 1) to pardon or absolve of wrongdoing
    - 2) to cancel a debt
    - 3) to give up resentment
  - Which of these definitions most closely resembles the forgiveness we receive from God?
  - Which most closely resembles the forgiveness Christians are expected to show others?

# Images of forgiveness

- The Hebrew and Greek words for forgiveness convey a variety of images.
  - to cover or atone: “Yet he was merciful; he forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them. Time after time he restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath.” Psalm 78:38

# Images of forgiveness

- The Hebrew and Greek words for forgiveness convey a variety of images.
  - to cover or atone
  - to carry or take away: “But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written.” Exodus 32:32

# Images of forgiveness

- The Hebrew and Greek words for forgiveness convey a variety of images.
  - to cover or atone
  - to carry or take away
  - to pardon: “No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” Jeremiah 31:34

# Images of forgiveness

- The Hebrew and Greek words for forgiveness convey a variety of images.
  - to cover or atone
  - to carry or take away
  - to pardon
  - to be gracious: “Be kind and compassionate to one another, ***forgiving*** each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Ephesians 4:32

# Images of forgiveness

- The Hebrew and Greek words for forgiveness convey a variety of images.
  - to cover or atone
  - to carry or take away
  - to pardon
  - to be gracious
  - to dismiss or send away: “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” Matthew 6:12-15

# Images of forgiveness

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  - to cover or atone
  - to carry or take away
  - to pardon
  - to be gracious
  - to dismiss or send away
  - remission, release, or freedom: “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’ ” Acts 2:38



# Repentance and forgiveness

- How are these two concepts interrelated?
- A popular belief is that we cannot forgive someone who doesn't first ask for forgiveness.

# When?

- For someone who is already in Christ, when does God forgive?
  - a) when the person repents
  - b) when the person asks for it
  - c) immediately
  - d) not until the Day of Judgment

# Contingent forgiveness?

- Is there anything we have to “do” (other than accept Christ) to receive forgiveness? (More specifically: *Is God’s forgiveness contingent on our forgiving others?*)
  - Matthew 6:15 – “But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

# Contingent forgiveness?

- Is there anything we have to “do” (other than accept Christ) to receive forgiveness? (More specifically: *Is God’s forgiveness contingent on our forgiving others?*)
  - Matthew 6:15
  - Luke 6:37-38 – “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. *Forgive, and you will be forgiven.* Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. *For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*”

# Summary

- We do not have the same capacity to forgive that God does.
  - He can and does forgive completely (making “forgive and forget” redundant words).
  - We can’t “forget” in the sense that we can’t remove something from our memory. What we *can* do is to not hold it against the other person.
- “Walking in the light” means immediate and total forgiveness.

# Next week...

- A Christian Life is *A Freedom-filled Life*.

## Notes for *A Christian Life is -filled Life*

Slide 1: <none>

Slide 2:

- **Question 1** on the handout – Allow as much discussion as you want, but the time period will be plenty full even if there's not much discussion here.
  - Just list the definitions – the discussion will come in succeeding bullets.
  - Both of the first two are characteristic of God's forgiveness. This is a big part of the lesson, and will be discussed in detail in later slides.
  - Only definition #3

Note the question says *most closely*. Clearly it *is* possible for us to cancel the debts of others (definition #2), but certainly not in the same sense that God cancels *our* debts.

With regard to definition #1, we have neither the *capacity* nor the *authority* to pardon or absolve anyone. In this sense, **it is not possible for us to forgive in the same sense as God forgives.**

This would be a good time to discuss the idea of “forgive and forget”. When God forgives, it is as if the sin never happened – it's not like “he wipes the slate clean”, as we often hear. ***He throws the slate away!*** God has not given human beings the capacity to forget in this sense. We *do*, however, have the capacity to choose to not hold something against another, and this is the type of forgiveness God expects of us. It is in *this* sense that we, too, can forgive “as if the sin never happened”.

After this discussion, there should be enough information available to answer **Question 2** on the handout. Basically the answer will summarize this slide.

Slide 3:

- Not much, if any, discussion required for these 6 images of forgiveness.

Slide 4-5: <none>

Slide 6:

### G5483

χαρίζομαι (form used in Eph 4:23 is χαριζόμενοι)

charizomai

*khar-id'-zom-ah-ee*

Middle voice from G5485; **to grant as a favor, that is, gratuitously**, in kindness, pardon or rescue: - deliver, (frankly) forgive, (**freely**) give, **grant**.

## G5485

χάρις

charis

*khar'-ece*

From G5463; *graciousness* (as *gratifying*), of manner or act (abstract or concrete; literal, figurative or spiritual; especially the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including *gratitude*): - acceptable, benefit, favor, gift, **grace** (-ious), joy liberality, pleasure, thank (-s, -worthy).

So, not only do *we* not deserve forgiveness from God, but **we are to forgive others, even when they do not deserve it from us!**

Slide 7: <none>

Slide 8:

So, why do we need to receive forgiveness from God? (**Question 4**) This is essentially a rhetorical question, though far from trivial. It's worth taking the time to ask and answer it.

The simple answer is because we are all sinners (Romans 3:23), and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

Slide 9:

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- The thinking goes like this: "Since God will not forgive someone who does not repent, who are *we* to do something God will not do?"

Ask the class what they think of that idea.

The idea that we should not put ourselves in the place of God is certainly valid, but forgiving someone who doesn't ask for it or who refuses to repent is not putting ourselves in the place of God, nor is it doing something God will not do. The reason is in the difference between our forgiveness and God's forgiveness, discussed earlier. When we forgive someone, we no longer hold it against that person. When we forgive, it not only frees us up to maintain a healthy relationship with the other person, but also frees us from the internal resentment, hatred, hurt feelings, and all the other emotions that commonly accompany damaged relationships. Refusing to forgive, on the other hand, causes us to hold it inside and allows resentment to build, damaging not only our relationship with the person, but endangering our own physical health as well. (See Matthew 6:15. Jesus, in Luke 17:3-4 says we should forgive when others repent. He doesn't address whether we should forgive when they *don't* repent, but there's nothing in the context that would suggest that we *shouldn't* forgive.)



Slide 10:

- **Question 5** on the handout. There will likely not be universal agreement among the class on the answer to this question. It's doubtful that anyone will make a case for answer choice d), so what about the other 3?

a) There can be no doubt that God is willing to forgive when we repent – 2 Chronicles 7:14, Jeremiah 36:3, and Acts 26:17-18 are all good passages to use here, but no one will disagree.

b) 1 John 1:9. Confession is not the same as asking for forgiveness, but it's not likely that someone who is "in Christ" (remember this was specified in the question) will confess sin without asking for forgiveness. This, of itself, would reflect an unrepentant attitude.

c) Expect the most disagreement here, if any. Two main passages support the idea that God forgives a Christian immediately when the Christian sins:

Psalm 32:1-2 (quoted by Paul in Romans 4:7-8) – "Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit." SO, who is it the Lord doesn't count sin against? It's the Christian who is walking in the light:

1 John 1:7 – "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." John does say in verse 9 that we will be forgiven "*if we confess our sins*", but there's no indication either here or elsewhere that indicates God *waits for us to confess* before he forgives. It's an *attitude of continual confession*, just like 1 Thess 5:17 is an attitude of continual prayer. It is essentially "*if we keep on confessing*".

Slide 11:

- **Question 6** on the handout.

Slide 12:

- - How can this be reconciled with the promise of forgiveness to anyone who believes in Jesus?

"All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." (Acts 10:43)

The best way to understand this is to realize that *receiving* and *extending* forgiveness can never be separated. The hardness of an unforgiving person prevents him from accepting forgiveness as well as from extending it.

Slide 13-14: <none>