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IS UNFORGIVENESS JUSTIFIABLE?

Greetings in Jesus!

Several years ago I was approached by a preacher while attending a ministry conference. He struck up a conversation and offered to come and preach at my church (which, incidentally, is one of the quickest ways to not get invited to preach at my church). As we spoke, he began sharing how he teaches Christians they don't have to forgive if they don't want to. He even stated that he doesn't forgive if he doesn't want to. Needless to say, I was shocked at his comments (and, no, he has never preached at my church).

In a totally unrelated situation, "Ann" (not the person's real name) began emailing me a few years ago detailing the tremendous conflict in her marriage. It would not be prudent to share the details she mentioned, but if all she explained is true, her life has been a living nightmare. Complicating things is that she and her husband profess Jesus as Savior. Over time, her emails became increasingly mean, spiteful and filled with borderline hate toward her husband; she wanted revenge and to see him suffer. Finally, I made it clear that she needed to walk in love and forgiveness, otherwise, she would never get over the pain. I explained that forgiveness does not mean approval, even providing scripture explaining her need to forgive. Her reaction? She turned on me with accusations I care not to repeat.

These are just two examples of many that I have encountered involving Christians and their refusal to forgive those who have done them wrong. So many defend taking offense, demanding apologies, holding grudges and justifying unforgiveness. But is unforgiveness truly justifiable in the life of a Believer? Furthermore, is refusing to love and forgive - no matter what people do to us - really that serious? I am going to let God answer those questions.

²⁴Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. ²⁵And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. ²⁶But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses. (Mark 11:24-25)

³⁸Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: ³⁹But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. ⁴¹And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. ⁴²Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

⁴³Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. ⁴⁴But 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; ⁴⁵That 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. (Matthew 5:38-45)

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

³⁴A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. ³⁵By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (John 13:34-35)

³¹Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: ³²And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. ¹Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; ²And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. (Ephesians 4:31-5:2)

⁷Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. ⁸Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

⁹He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. ¹⁰He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. ¹¹But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes. ¹²I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. (1 John 2:7-12)

¹¹For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. ¹²Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. ¹³Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

¹⁴We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. ¹⁵Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

(1 John 3:11-15)

⁷Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. ⁸He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. ⁹In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. ¹⁰Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

¹²No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. ¹³Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. ¹⁵Whosoever shall confess

that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. ¹⁶And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

¹⁷Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. ¹⁹We love him, because he first loved us.

²⁰If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? ²¹And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also. (1 John 4:7-21)

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. ²³Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. ²⁴And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵But 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.

²⁶The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. ²⁷Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

²⁸But 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. ²⁹And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. ³⁰And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

³¹So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. ³²Then 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: ³³Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? ³⁴And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

³⁵So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. (Matthew 18:21-35)

¹⁹For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. ²¹For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: ²²Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: ²³Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: ²⁴Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. (1 Peter 2:19-24)

It should be explicitly clear by now that God takes the issue of love and forgiveness far more seriously than what many Christians seem to think. We are **COMMANDED** to love, we are to love as God loves us and we are to forgive as God has forgiven us, no matter what has been done to us. It is true that our free will gives us the option to not love and not forgive; but if we are going to be faultless before God, we will love and forgive all the wrong we experience.

Some Christians may dismiss this by claiming they have tried, but just can't forgive. That is a lie, plain and simple. You see, 1 John 4:16 states that God is love. When we accept Jesus, our new man - the born again spirit - is created in God's righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24). This means His nature of love is born in us and is now a part of our spirit, giving us the capacity to love and forgive as He loves and forgives us. What it comes down to is whether or not we want to obey God and stay in fellowship with Him. Christians **CAN** forgive if they want to. Since unforgiveness is not a part of God's character and nature, Christians who refuse to love and forgive will experience conviction. However, it is possible for Christians to sear their conscience to this conviction and continue to hold grudges, refusing to love and forgive. This is extremely serious! According to scripture if we do not forgive:

- We are building a wall to God's forgiveness toward us.
- We cannot truly love God.
- We are a liar if we refuse to forgive and say we love God.
- We are walking in darkness.
- We are abiding in death.
- God considers us a murderer (and no murderer has eternal life in himself).
- We cannot truly live by faith, because faith works by love (Galatians 5:6).
- We open our lives to demonic tormenters.

I sincerely hope this is sinking in! There is no "thing" that someone can do to us or those dear to us that Jesus has not already dealt with by His death on the cross. There is no hurtful act anyone can do that is beyond the cleansing scope of Jesus' blood. When we refuse to forgive, we are essentially stating that what someone did exceeds the completed work of Jesus and the blood He shed for the remission of sins. In other words, we are setting our own "throne" above the throne of God. The last time someone tried that, he (Lucifer) was forever banished from his place in Heaven. Is unforgiveness truly worth such a risk?

"Brother Martin, I see what you're saying. But I've been hurt so badly. Please tell me how do I forgive?" That is a very good question. Very briefly, here are steps to take to walk in God's love and forgiveness:

- Though you may not presently feel like forgiving, ask God to help you want to feel like forgiving.
- Each day, pray for whoever offended you.
- Each day, confess you love and forgive that person exactly the way God loves and forgives you.
- Each day, worship God for his love and forgiveness toward you and the person who offended you.
- Cast down every thought that tries to rise up and dwell on how you were wronged.
- Pray in the Spirit; the Holy Ghost sheds God's love abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5).

Along with this, I want to forewarn you: sooner or later you are going to encounter someone who is going to lie to you or about you, betray you, turn on you, treat you unfairly, or do something that will break your heart. As a pastor, I can tell you I have had numerous opportunities to hold unforgiveness toward people who act in ways that defy all common sense. But I cannot afford to allow the actions of others to determine the course of my life or ministry. I have made a decision that I want to walk in unconditional love and forgiveness, no matter what is done to me.

Living continually in the flow of God's supernatural love is the key to God's power and experiencing all He has promised. God's love **NEVER** fails!

In His Grace,

Jim

P.S. - This month I am offering a CD of a sermon that will take this teaching about God's love to a deeper level. It is titled, "A Communion-Ready Heart." You can receive a copy at no charge by completing and mailing the order form below.

>>>> **SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT** <<<<

Our 2017 Prayer and Power Conference will be Sunday, April 23 - Friday, April 28. Our host hotel will again be the:

Country Inn and Suites
3971 Colonel Glenn Highway, Fairborn, Ohio 45324
(937) 429-2222, email shekira.kanemoto@countryinns.com,
web site <https://www.countryinns.com/beavercreek-hotel-oh-45324/ohfairbo/rooms>

Rates per night (tax not included): Double Queen: \$105; King Standard \$105; King Suite \$120. Room space is limited. Those attending are responsible for making their own hotel reservations.

_____ Check here to receive a CD of the sermon, "A Communion-Ready Heart."

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