
BIBLE TALK

This the question is: **Should Christians "just forgive" others even when no repentance is present?**

This is a very relevant question because the common notion is that a Christian will "*just forgive*" those who trespass against them without requiring a confession of wrongdoing, nor repentance on the part of the offender. In fact, it is believed that if a Christian requires someone to repent and confess fault before they will grant forgiveness, then that isn't much of a Christian. Now the one who should be ashamed of himself is the so-called "*Christian*" who won't "*just forgive*." Now the victim is the trespasser and the perpetrator is the innocent one. Is this really what the scriptures teach? That's our question this week and we hope you will listen carefully to the answer that we give from the scriptures.

WE ARE NOT GREATER THAN GOD

First, the Bible teaches that God Himself will not "*just forgive*" people whether they ask for forgiveness or not. Because God is just, there must be some payment made for sins that are committed. God never "*just forgave*" anyone. In order to forgive sinners and be just at the same time, God had to send His only begotten Son to die on the cross as payment for the sins of mankind (Rom 3:24-26).

Second, God does not "*just forgive*" people arbitrarily just because His Son died on the cross to pay for sin. God has set up conditions which must be met in order to receive forgiveness thru Jesus' blood. Those conditions are: Belief in Jesus as the Son of God (Mk 16:16), repentance (Acts 2:38), confession of faith (Rom 10:10), and immersion in water for a specific reason - the "*remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38). Even with Jesus' death on the cross, not one single man or woman will be forgiven unless they submit to the conditions set by God.

The point is, God cannot and does not "*just forgive*" people. He requires that men and women repent and seek forgiveness on His terms. If they agree, then and only then does He grant forgiveness. Furthermore, this granting of forgiveness is not something God had to do, but something He does only because of His gracious and merciful nature (Eph 2:8-9).

Now ... if God cannot forgive unless there is repentance on the part of the sinner, how can Christian forgive those who trespass against them without repentance on the part of the sinner? Are Christians able to do what God cannot do? Are we able to do more than God? Can we be more generous, more loving, more merciful, more gracious, and more caring than God Himself? Certainly not.

WHAT JESUS SAID **ABOUT FORGIVENESS**

In order that there would be no doubt about forgiving others, Jesus said this:

Luke 17:3-4

³ "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and **if he repents**, forgive him.

⁴ "And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, '**I repent**,' you shall forgive him."

Jesus made repentance on the part of the offender a requirement before forgiveness may be granted. Repentance means a change of mind that results in a change of life. If there is no repentance, no change of attitude with a corresponding change of action, then the Christian cannot forgive another.

Again, notice:

Matthew 18:15-17

¹⁵ "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

¹⁶ "But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'

¹⁷ "And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

Consistent with what we have already studied, this passage confirms the conclusion that Christians may not "just forgive" someone whether they ask for it or not. There must be a change in the attitude and actions of a sinner before Christians may forgive them.

The doctrine of "*just forgive*" others is not rooted in scripture, but in emotion.

THE MURDERERS OF CHRIST

One common argument used to justify the theory of "*just forgive*" someone whether they ask for it or not, is when Jesus was dying on the cross. As He looked down from the cross, He prayed to His Father in heaven:

Luke 23:34

³⁴ Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." ...

It is believed by many that Jesus was here "*just forgiving*" people who were killing Him, and this, therefore, justifies the theory of "*just forgive*." However, if you will read in Acts 2:36, you will see the apostle Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, charging the Jews with murdering Jesus. He told them they needed to repent and be baptized to receive forgiveness. This is strange preaching if the Jews were already forgiven the day Jesus prayed His prayer on the cross. The truth of the matter is, Jesus' prayer was not answered the day He prayed on the cross. His prayer was not answered until the Day of Pentecost when the Jews were offered the opportunity to receive forgiveness thru repentance and baptism. When 3000 obeyed these conditions, they were forgiven (Acts 2:41). Then, and ***only then*** did Jews receive forgiveness, and only those who obeyed.

So, in conclusion, the theory of "*just forgive*" someone whether they ask for it or not, is not taught in the scriptures. This is a false theory based only on human reason and emotion, but not on the sacred scriptures.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Well ... thanks for listening to our message this week. We invite you to visit our website www.WillOfTheLord.com. There you may download the notes and the audio file of the message you just listened to.

Call again next week when we consider a new subject on ***Bible Talk***.