

IMPACT

I Must **P**ersonally **A**cknowledge **C**hrist **T**oday
Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; *in all your ways acknowledge Him* and He shall direct your path.
Proverbs 3:5-6

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

Quote: “Character is the product of daily, hourly actions, and words and thoughts; *daily forgivenesses, unselfishness, kindnesses, sympathies, charities, sacrifices for the good of others*, struggles against temptation, submissiveness under trial. Oh, it is these, like the blending colors in a picture or the blending notes of music which constitute the man.” J.R. Macduff

Upon finishing His model prayer, Jesus returned to the issue of forgiving others and included a most sobering warning. Failure to forgive others hinders fellowship with God Who is long-suffering, and who, in His faithfulness and justice, has promised to forgive us of all our sins against Him.¹ When I think of the long-suffering of God concerning my own failures, I am humbled. I marvel to think that He forgives me of my trespasses against Him, full *knowing that I will sin yet again and again....* Such forgiveness is truly an amazing tribute to the glory of His grace!

Forgiving others is set against the backdrop of Christ’s teaching on love that does what is best, even for those who align themselves against us. It was a lesson that He lived to the fullest. He reconciled us to God when we were “alienated and enemies in our mind by wicked works.”² Jesus taught, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ *But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*”³

Forgiveness

The willingness to forgive others for their offenses against us is actually an indication that a person is truly a Christian! The Puritan preacher, Matthew Henry wrote that “Those that do not *forgive their brother’s trespasses*, did never truly repent of their own, nor ever truly believe the gospel; and therefore that which is *taken away* is only *what they seemed to have*. This is intended to teach us, that *they shall have judgment without mercy, that have showed no mercy.*⁴ It is indispensably necessary to (our) pardon and peace, that we not only *do justly*, but *love mercy*. It is an essential part of that religion which is *pure and undefiled before God and the Father*, of that *wisdom from above*, which is *gentle, and easy to be entreated.*”⁵

Jesus illustrated the extent to which we must offer forgiveness in response to a question from Peter. “‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.’” The rabbis taught that forgiving someone three times was sufficient. Peter thought that forgiving someone seven times was “going the extra mile!” Jesus taught that forgiveness can have no limit! He offered a parable in which a servant owed his master “ten thousand talents (which) combines the largest Greek numeral with the largest unit of currency. Even one talent was a small fortune; ten thousand was beyond the wildest dreams of ordinary people.”⁶ The magnitude of our debt to God is even greater. We are much like Israel. “Their heart was not steadfast with Him, Nor were they faithful in His covenant. But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, And did not destroy them. Yes, *many a time* He turned His anger away, And did not stir up all His wrath; For He remembered that they were but flesh, A breath that passes away and does not come again. How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, And grieved Him in the desert!”⁷ *That’s us!* We are often cold, carnal and callused to God’s forgiveness.. He is so longsuffering! To be godly, we must imitate His forgiveness of us by forgiving those who repeatedly trespass against us.

1 | John 1:9 2 Colossians 1:21 3 Matthew 5:43-48 4 James 2:13 5 James 1:27; 3:13-18 6 R.T. France 7 Psalm 78:38-42