

The Forgiving Love of Jesus Christ

Natural ability to remember and forget – Jesus Calls us to rise above our animal instincts.

Man has the natural ability to remember (memory) and to forget. As a normal response to stimulus, man's response to being hurt/wronged against is to either retaliate in a similar manner, immediately or later, keeping the incident in memory or to suppress the incident, without any retaliation out of respect or fear. However, it may be forgotten only sometimes even if it is put aside and overcome for the time being.

Jesus calls us to rise above this animal instinct and practice the power of forgiving love/forgiveness – a new and extraordinary quality which will ensure our becoming God's children.

God's Forgiving Love

The practice of forgiveness began, as far as man is concerned, with the first act of forgiveness when God forgave man for his first/original sin, committed in the Garden of Eden. After this God blessed or forgave man according to his state of faithfulness or sin. Yet when man's sins went beyond God's limit of tolerance, man also experienced God's anger and wrath. This changed after the coming of Christ and his carrying our sins upon the cross which gained for man the forgiveness of his sins. [By their acts of forgiving love, which includes mercy/consideration/compassion/kindness/love/etc., God and Jesus set the example for us to follow. When we imitate them in this respect, we actually become God's children. (Mt 5.6-7. 43-48; Lk 6.27-28)

God forgives us our sins because:

- ◆ Sins make us spiritually dead. **(Col 2.13; Eph 2.1, 5)**
- ◆ To set us free **(Eph 1.7; Col 1.14)** (To be set free means to have our sins forgiven)
- ◆ To give us the opportunity to attain salvation and thereby eternal life.

God's creation and plans for man would not have included the event of 'death'
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Except for the sin against the Holy Spirit, all our sins will be forgiven. **(Mt 12.31-32; Mk 3.28-29)(Mt12: ³¹And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³²Anyone who speaks a word against**

the Son of Man will be forgiven, **but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.**)

About forgiving love, the Bible says:

Ps 32.1-5: (The need to confess so as to be forgiven) ‘Happy are those whose sins are forgiven, whose wrongs are pardoned...When I did not confess my sins, I was worn out from crying all day long...Then I **confessed** my sins to you; I did not conceal my wrongdoings. I decided to confess them to you, and you forgave all my sins.’

Ps 130.3-4: If you kept a record of our sins, who could escape being condemned? But you forgive us, so that we should stand in awe of you.

If God kept a record of our sins and he did not forgive us, our plight would be terrible. All our sins we had committed are written off at the moment of being forgiven, but, thereafter, if we sin again they are recorded and they may be viewed with greater severity

[**Jn 5.14** ...you are well now; so stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.]

Mt 3.2, 6; Lk 3.3: (John the Baptist started his mission by preaching) ³“Turn away from your sins, because the Kingdom of heaven is near and **God will forgive your sins.**” ⁶They **confessed** their sins and he baptized them in the Jordan.

1Jn 1.8-9: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us. But if we **confess our sins to God**, he will keep his promise and do what is right: he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing.

Mt 12.31-32; Mk 3.28-29: As mentioned before, except for the sin against the Holy Spirit, all our sins will be forgiven.

Jesus taught us to love our enemies

“Who is your enemy?” Your enemy can be anyone in the world, in your locality, in your work place, in your community, in any group or association you are a member of, any one of your relatives and even your own family. So if there is **a person**, whoever he may be, whom **you cannot or do not forgive**, then, he **becomes your enemy**. In a family the worst enemy one’s worst enemy is often a close family member/relative. The spouse may be the worst enemy; or the sibling may be the worst enemy, or the parent may be the worst enemy, or the child/children may be the worst enemy, and so on. (Mt 10.34-36; Lk 12.51-53-these are given below too)

Mt 5.7: (The Sermon on the Mount-True happiness) Happy/Blessed are **those** who are **merciful to others; God will be merciful to them.**

Lk 6.36: Be **merciful just as your Father** is merciful.

Lk 6.27-28; Mt.5.43-48:...**Love your enemies**, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you and pray for those who ill-treat you, **so that you may become sons of your Father in heaven.** (all this you can do only if you are forgiving).

Mt 5.38-39; Lk 6.29: You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But now I tell you: **do not take revenge** on someone who wrongs you. If anyone hits you on one cheek, let him hit the other one too. [Rom 12.19, 21[17-21]; Heb 10.30-31; Deu 32.35 –these are given below too]

Lk 7.36-50: (Jesus is anointed in Bethany at the home of Simon the Pharisee) In the home in Simon the Pharisee, '...**a woman** who lived a sinful life...brought an alabaster jar full of perfume and stood behind Jesus, by his feet, **crying and wetting his feet with her tears...she dried his feet with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.**' ... Simon criticized this to himself thinking that a real prophet would know what kind of bad woman his was. Jesus tells him, 'Two men owed money to a money-lender; one owed 500 silver coins and the other owed him 50. Neither could pay him back, so he cancelled both the debts. Which one, then, will love him more?' Simon answered, 'I suppose that it would be the one who was forgiven more...I tell you, then, **the great love she has shown proves that her many sins have been forgiven. But whoever has been forgiven little shows only a little love**'

Greater your love and faith in Jesus, more will be the number of your sins forgiven. Also, **those who have been forgiven more , will show more love** – or at least that is the way it should be – the question is **are we like that or not** – you have to find the answer yourself.

Lk 17.3-4: If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you **seven times in one day, and each time he** comes to you saying, 'I **repent,**' **you must forgive him."**

Jn 15.12: My commandment is this: **love one another, just as I love you.**

This may be taken as the **12th commandment.** Jesus does not say '...as I have loved you' stressing the point that his love for us is constant, continuous and everlasting. These words also tend to mean: **forgive one another, just as I forgive you**, which is the message underlying the original words, as forgiveness is one of the ingredients of "love"

Why Forgive?

*A heart that is unforgiving will not have lasting peace in it.

To **become God's children** and to be spiritually alive.

To become **free/liberated children of Christ**– **without** any **bondages** and stop being a channel for evil/negative forces

For the sake of your own **salvation and eternal life** in heaven.

Mt 7.1-2, 3-5: When you do not forgive, it means that you are sitting in judgement or anger/hate.

Mt 6.12, 14-15: In the Lord's Prayer, 'Our **Father**,' it is given: ⁶'**Forgive us** the wrongs we have done, **as we forgive** the wrongs that **others** have done to us...' ¹⁴'If you forgive others the wrongs they have done to you, your Father in heaven will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive the wrongs you have done.'

"God's Conditional forgiveness!"

The above was given earlier in detail in:

Sir 28.1-7: ¹...if you take vengeance on someone the Lord will take vengeance on you. ²But if you forgive someone who has wronged you, your sins will be forgiven when you pray. ³You cannot expect the Lord to pardon you while you are bearing a grudge against someone else. ⁴You yourself are a sinner, and if you won't forgive another person, you have no right to pray that the Lord will forgive your sins. ⁵If you cannot get rid of your anger, you have no hope of forgiveness – you are only a human being. ⁶...some day you will die, and your body will decay. So give up hate and live by the Lord's commands... ⁷...Instead of getting upset over your neighbour's faults, overlook them.

Mk 11.25-26: And when you stand and pray, forgive anything you may have against anyone, so that your Father in heaven will forgive the wrongs you have done.

So if God should hear your prayers you have to have forgiven anything you may have against anyone – **"a pre-condition to God hearing your prayer for forgiveness!"**

When forgiving others **you become Christ-like** as you will be exercising the authority of Jesus to forgive sins on earth. So it is an authority which if used meaningfully will be an act of power and not an act of weakness.

Rom 12.19, 21[17-21]; Heb 10.30-31; Deu 32.35: ¹⁹..."I will take revenge, I will pay back, says the Lord."... ²¹Do not let evil defeat you; instead, conquer evil with good.

- ◆ **When you forgive, it becomes the need of God to give you justice** and those who have wronged you will become answerable to God.

The punishment and/or judgment you can wreak on your wrongdoers will be nothing compared to that which they will get from God.

- ◆ So when you forgive others, **they are worse off than if you do not forgive them, for they become answerable to God and not to man.**
- ◆ More often than not, **you will find that people who have wronged you will be living comfortable in front of your eyes, while you will be all wrought up and tensed, full of anger/hate.**
- ◆ Continuing in such state will surely lead you to becoming a doctor's nightmare as your frustrations will cause in you **all kinds of illness**, physical and/or mental. All this **you will suffer in vain while those who have hurt you will be seen living happily.**

So, here is where you have to ask yourself, why you should be suffering needlessly, and is it not foolish to have caused yourself so much pain and expense; all for the mere want of forgiveness. The costs of your unforgiving attitude may not be justifiable.

- ◆ So, **it is all the more your need to forgive rather than put yourself through needless pains, sufferings and costs.** This is a call to be practical or prudent.

How many times should you forgive?

Mt 18.21-35: (The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant) ²¹When Peter asks Jesus whether he has to forgive his brother who keeps on sinning against him seven times, ²²Jesus said, "No, not seven times but seventy times seven..." ²³⁻²⁷and tells the parable of the servant who was forgiven by the king whom he owed a huge sum, ²⁸⁻³¹but who did not forgive a fellow servant who owed him a small amount. ³²⁻³⁴As a result the king, who was told of this by the other servants, became very angry and sent the bad that servant to jail to be punished until he paid back the whole huge amount. ³⁵And Jesus concluded, "That is how my Father in heaven will treat every one of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.

This highlights the point that **forgiveness should be genuine, sincere, true** – and to be so, not even a shred of an unforgiving state should exist in your heart – **your heart or your inner state should be free of any kind of unforgiving attitude**; which includes not only anger or hate or even hurt.

Mt 7.12: Do unto others what you would have them do unto you.

This may be also taken to mean: **'do unto others what you would want God to do unto**

you.'

What to do when a brother sins against you (Mt 18.15-17):

*go to him and show him his fault, privately just between yourselves. If he listens to you, you have won your brother back.

*if he will not listen to you, take one or two other persons, to be witnesses, and settle the matter.

*if he will not listen to them, then tell the whole thing to the church.

*finally, if he will not listen to the church, treat him as though he were a pagan or a tax collector.

No one hates a pagan/tax collector – **we only need to have the necessary social or official interaction with such persons and no personal relations.**

In other words, this means: **let such a brother be like a stranger to you.**

Surely, **you will not hate any stranger**, he will be simply someone you do not know and maybe you need not know.

The forgiving love of Jesus

Mt 9.1-8: (Jesus Heals a Paralysed Man) The authority of Jesus to forgive sins (on earth)...Courage my son! Your sins are forgiven...Is it easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? I will prove to you then, that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. So he said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, pick up your bed, and go home!" The man got up and went home.

Eph 4.26-27, 29, 31, 32: ²⁶If you become angry, do not let your anger lead you into sin, and do stay angry all day. ²⁷Don't give the Devil a chance. ²⁹Do not use harmful words... ³¹get rid of all bitterness, passion, and anger; no more shouting or insults, no more hateful feelings of any sort. ³²Instead be kind and tender-hearted to one another, **forgive one another, as God has forgiven you through Christ.**

Jn 8.1-11: (A Woman caught in Adultery) "...I do not condemn you either. Go, but do not sin again."

Lk 22.50-51: Jesus does **the miracle of reattaching the ear** of the High Priest's slave which one of the apostles cut off when they came to arrest Jesus.

Mt 26.31-35: Jesus predicts **Peter's denial** – **three times** before the cock crows tonight.

Mt 26.69-75: Peter **denies Jesus** as predicted.

Jn 21.15-17: (The Risen Christ and Peter) **Three times Peter is asked whether he loves Jesus**, to which he says he does each time. (to nullify his earlier denials and gain forgiveness)

Three times Peter denied Jesus and Jesus asks him whether he loves him the very same three times. This was to:

- ◆ **repent the wrong** he did although he had proclaimed he would not do so in the face of the prediction of Jesus that he would.
- ◆ **be born again in Spirit**
- ◆ **gain acceptance from Jesus when he goes before the Father in heaven.**
Otherwise he could have been rejected by Jesus for publicly denying/rejecting him.[Mt 10.32-33; Lk 12.8-9]

Lk 23.34: Jesus said, **“Forgive them, Father! They don’t know what they are doing”** The ultimate/greatest example of true forgiving love – executed by Jesus even as he was in the midst of his greatest sufferings, pains and agonies on the cross – by praying for God to forgive man for the wrong done to him in making him suffer and crucifying him. In these words, Jesus also prays for various aspects of human life which require the forgiveness from our Father in heaven, some of which may be;
*Man continuing to live in his sinful ways (a life of jealousy, cunning, deceit, hate, anger, pride, vengeance, murder/killing, slander, etc.); oblivious of its terrible consequences.

Areas/dimensions requiring the application of forgiving love

◆ To forgive those who wrong/hurt/persecute us.	1
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You must forgive:

- the person all the wrongs he/she has done to you
- the deeds/actions of such a person done against you
- the words spoken by such a person
- the wrong thoughts that may be held by such a person

We generally think we need to forgive only those who wrong/hurt/persecute us. However, there are other areas/dimensions in which forgiving love is a must for a person to have peace enter and live in his heart. If such areas are not known and suitably dealt with, it would leave the person in a state where his peace is eroded from within and his life becoming restless, etc. These areas/dimensions are:

◆ To forgive those who hurt /wrong/persecute persons whom you love	2
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You must forgive:

- the person all the wrongs he/she has done to those you love
- the deeds/actions of such a person done against those you love
- the words spoken by such a person against those you love
- the wrong thoughts that may be held by such a person against those you love

<p>◆ To forgive those who do not rise up to your (level of) expectations [This is mostly found or needed in close relations like family, relatives, husband-wife, parents-children and vice versa, etc.]</p>	3
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You must forgive:

- Such a person
- His/her deeds/actions
- His/her words spoken
- His/her wrong thoughts that may be there

<p>◆ To forgive oneself</p>	5
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You must forgive:

- Yourself
- Your words
- Your actions
- Your wrong thoughts

This requires the realization of the need to be humble enough to forgive oneself. Sometimes, even if God has forgiven a person, he/she will not forgive himself/herself. (Elimayil ahangaram – inverted pride – taking pride in humility – with outward humility/religiosity – another kind of self-righteousness – and not the righteousness-before-God required) This is to be done without losing the awareness of your state of imperfection/sinfulness and the inherent weakness of our flesh and its latent capacity to sin. Otherwise, you would go the extreme extent of assuming that, as all your sins are forgiven, you are perfect and sinless and maybe even above sinning. This in turn is what likely leads such persons to the attitude that they are “gods.”

<p>◆ To forgive not only the persons who do you wrong but also the need to forgive the wrong/hurting/insulting “word” said and/or “deeds/acts” done against you.</p>	4
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To truly have forgiven a person and all his words and/or actions completely, we should be able to consider every such event as an experience of hurt/pain from which we can learn a lesson that our Lord Jesus wants us to learn. If so, we will become prudent and wiser. In such case, whatever happens involving the person who hurt us or even in associating with him, we will be free of the old hurt/pain rising up in us suddenly.

In each of these cases the need to forgive:

- The person
- The words spoken that have caused the wrong/hurt
- The deeds/actions that have caused the wrong/hurt
- The wrong thoughts that may have been there

is repeated here, as a separate point, as it is a very important aspect, which if not done will leave the act of forgiving love and you incomplete and troubled. Also the consequences of this state can be very difficult and hard.

For example, you may feel you may have forgiven a person completely. Usually we tend to be quicker in forgiving the person because we may have to face such persons socially or officially or even in a family set up. However, we would not think that the words spoken or actions done have also to be recalled and forgiven. We forget **that human words and/or actions and/or thoughts have the power to make one happy or sad/hurt**. Either case each will leave its effect in us. For the hurts/sadness/pain to be removed **we must be able to forgive such words and/or actions and/or thoughts**. Otherwise, they will become burdens which we end up suppressing rather than forgiving and surrendering.

For example, say something suddenly happens involving such a person or that is similar to the issue you had had. The very words and/or acts which had hurt/pained you will immediately, literally, jump into your mind. This memory will make you to feel the same or at least similar kind of hurt/pain all over again even if you do not allow yourself to feel any rejection/anger towards the person you thought you had forgiven. Thereby proving to you that you have truly not been able to forgive the words and/or actions of such a person, and further revealing that even if you hold hurt within you, your forgiving love is not complete.

The Forgiving Love of Christ will lead You to forgive thoughts, words and deeds

All sins begin essentially at the thought level after which it may or may not be implemented by word or deed. Man sins mostly by thought

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We have the freedom of harnessing any thought. We usually store only those thoughts that we feel are important or may be needed later. In other words we have the power

to filter and choose what we want to store or not. [**1 Thes 5.19-20: gives us the authority to do so**].

However, if we store all the thoughts that enter our mind, we will have a heavy burden to carry within us. If we do not let those thoughts/emotions go out of us we will experience mental difficulties like mental fatigue, confusion, etc. as well as physical problems like tiredness and even various kinds of illness. The illnesses that arise on account of our stored emotions are termed “Psychosomatic illness.” They are a result of the manifestation of emotions within us trying to get out. The forgiving love of Jesus can easily heal many such illnesses.

When we eat, the nutrition we need is taken by our body and the rest is ejected as waste. Imagine that we do not emit our waste for a day or two; we may not feel any discomfort. Yet, if this condition persists then we will surely feel discomfort at first, then we will feel very disturbed and worried. If this condition continues, we may even become ill.

The Word of God teaches us that we will be judged by our own words (Mt 12.36-37), deeds/actions (Mt 16.27; Rom 2.6; 2 Cor 5.10) and thoughts (Rom 2.16). This proves beyond any doubt that anyone can sin by word and/or deed and/or thought. Therefore, it is all the more necessary to be able to forgive not only the person who has wronged you but also his words and/or deeds that have wronged you and even his wrong thoughts about you that hurts you. In the same way, you need to forgive not only the person who has wronged someone you care for but also his words and/or deeds that have wronged the one you care for, and even his wrong thoughts about the one you care for. Of course, this means that you must forgive yourself, your words and /or deeds, and also your thoughts.

All sins begin essentially at the thought level after which it may or may not be implemented by word or deed. Anyway, man sins mostly by thought.

Each of the above five areas/dimensions of forgiving love will fall under the “God’s Conditional Forgiveness” mentioned earlier

<p>◆ To pray to our Lord Jesus that you will be forgiven by those who need to forgive you for the wrong/hurt/ pain/etc. that you caused or may have cause them, knowingly or unknowingly. This is “a pre-condition to God hearing your prayer for forgiveness” The “Cycle of Forgiveness” becomes complete only when this is done [Mt 5.23-24].</p>	<p>6</p>
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<p>To become eligible for forgiveness from our Father in heaven, you need to</p>	<p>7</p>
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complete the cycle of forgiveness by executing: the first five areas/dimensions under “God’s Conditional Forgiveness,” as may be applicable; and the sixth, which is “a pre-condition to God hearing your prayer for forgiveness.”	
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This is to be done without losing the awareness of your state of imperfection/sinfulness and the inherent weakness of our flesh and its latent capacity to sin. Otherwise, you would go the extreme extent of assuming that, as all your sins are forgiven, you are perfect and sinless and maybe even above sinning. This in turn is what likely leads such persons to the attitude that they are “gods.”

Other kinds of Forgiveness

[An erroneous **idea** had come up in some Christian circles – given in an article by a nun in Charis India, a Christian Magazine – that we have **to “Forgive God”** which is **proved wrong** by the example of the Potter and the Clay **in Rom 9.19-20**]

Convenient Forgiveness: (Pretending to forgive just to get things done, etc.)

Self-righteous Forgiveness: (Mariamma: “Lord forgive Achamma, she is living such a wretched life)

(There may be more variations)

Why does an unforgiving attitude persist?

Partial or half-hearted forgiveness – is essentially the unforgiving attitude in you giving value to yourself, whether directly or indirectly, causes an unforgiving attitude, whereas acknowledging **that all value comes from Christ makes it possible and easy to forgive.**

Some may view the act of forgiveness as a point of weakness and thereby resist it.

Once you realize that **to forgive is essentially to your advantage and well being,** you will realize that **it is yet another way to liberation.**

What can you do when you feel you cannot forgive?

We believe in our Lord Jesus as the one and only one Lord and Savior who can make the impossible easily possible.

So, pray to our Lord Jesus, admitting humbly your inability/incapacity/reluctance to forgive and ask him to help you to be able to forgive, in his name and for the glory of God and your own salvation. [Lk 1.37; 2 Cor 12.9]

And he will help you to forgive.

Tests to know whether you have truly forgiven

*After you forgive, that which you had to forgive should become, be it a person or word or event, nothing but an experience from which you have learnt a lesson from Jesus. So when you think of it again or someone talks of it or you face it again, you should be able to view it without rejection or hate or hurt or any such emotion. You should be able to see it normally as you would the same as if you were facing it for the first time; keeping in mind the lessons learnt from the past experience, with necessary caution and prudence.

*Examine whether you think of such experiences often with remorse or regret or anger etc.

*Does your mind tend to wander into such matters off and on, especially when you are alone? Do you like to spend time pondering over such thoughts?

Even if “hurt” feelings remain, it is an indication that you have not forgiven completely.

You can test yourself in similar ways and be assured that you have succeeded in forgiving fully a matter only when you can return to it and think about it and talk about it without going through any of the same feelings you had had earlier when you had such experience first.

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