

## Doctrine of Unforgiving Forgiveness

1. One of the great challenges that humans face in general and a Christian in particular is the matter of forgiveness.
2. Christians know that having a forgiving heart is the will of the Lord and the teaching of the apostles.
  - *Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*
  - *Ephesians 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*
3. There are serious and eternal consequences for not cultivating a forgiving spirit.
  - *Matthew 6:14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*
4. Knowing what the will of the Lord is, knowing the teaching of the apostles, knowing the fearful consequences of not forgiving, many Christians decide to pretend to be forgiving of others when they have been wounded deeply.
5. The pretentious forgiving spirit is characterized by the following, with disastrous consequences.
  - First, there is a refusal to acknowledge how deeply wounded the heart has been. In the telling, and retelling of the narrative of an injustice done, a breezy conclusion is drawn with superficial language as to how the offending person has been forgiven.
 

*Disastrous consequence.* There is a root of bitterness that has been sown deep in the heart which in time will spring up to defile many. Realizing this danger the exhortation comes in Hebrews 12:15, “*Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.*”
  - Second, there is a telling and retelling of a specific negative narrative to anyone who will listen.
 

*Disastrous consequence.* What is done in the name of a voluntary sharing and being verbally therapeutic is really another act of ventilation and thus a violation of the biblical exhortation to put the past behind as per Philippians 3:13 “*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.*”

6. How to determine if an unforgiving forgiving spirit is present.
- An unforgiving forgiving spirit is present when the rhetoric of having forgiven someone does not match the inner turmoil of anger in the heart. *Colossians 3:8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.* The word for “anger” is “orge” and refers to violent passion while the word for “wrath” is “thumos” referring to fierce indignation. It is the later which haunts the soul of the saint mostly and causes a spirit of unforgiving forgiveness because it is a settled attitude that can be returned to time and again in the privacy of meditation.
  - An unforgiving forgiving spirit is present when the past is remembered. Divine forgiveness does not remember the past. *Hebrews 10:17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*
  - An unforgiving forgiving spirit is present when linkage is made between present conduct and past behavior. Divine forgiveness deals only with the present. *Psalms 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*
  - An unforgiving forgiving spirit is present when an obligation is placed upon a person. What was once done as an express of grace and mercy is transformed into an obligation to act in a certain way. Forgiveness releases a person from any further obligations or threat of penalty. A renewed reminder and statement of expectation with the past in view is not biblical forgiveness. *Revelation 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.* The word for “washed” is actually “luo” which means “to destroy, dissolve, loosen”. An unforgiving forgiving spirit never really loosens a person from a past situation.
  - An unforgiving spirit tends to ventilate in the name of sharing only to feel guilty of being too harsh and too critical and so after the damage is done tries to redeem the image of the person by stating that they are really not too bad. Self is also redeemed by saying superficially, “*But I have forgiven them.*”
7. It is important to recognize the concept of an unforgiving forgiving spirit because it is one of the most effective manifestations of the flesh in destroying inner peace and happiness and fellowship within the church.
8. When an unforgiving forgiving spirit is honestly perceived to be in the heart, then a basis for true forgiveness can be present. Until an unforgiving spirit is recognized and confessed the spiritual ego of self will remain inflated, true truth will be vanquished from the mind, a root of bitterness will eventually spring up, there will be no inner peace, and there will be no vital godliness such as was found in Christ at Calvary and in Stephen before the Sanhedrin. *Luke 23:34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. Acts 7:60 And he [Stephen] kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

9. For the Christian concerned about an unforgiving forgiving spirit in the heart the following steps should be taken.
- Distinguish between those moments of abiding affection for someone and those moments of remembering their transgression and the “*thumos*” passionate indignation that memory generates.
  - Confess the “*thumos*” as a sin and something to be “*put off*” in the will of God.
  - Do not deny the presence of “*thumos*” in the heart. Confess its presence honestly as many times as the passions are aroused. *1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
  - Ask for special prayer in this area from someone who can be trusted. *James 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*
  - Remember that God knows the heart. While spiritual God language can be used about having a forgiving heart, the Lord knows if it is true and so will a person with the spiritual gift of discernment. *Psalms 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*
  - Do not become resentful if someone points out the possibility of an unforgiving forgiving is present. *Proverbs 27:17 Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.*
  - Release, as many times as necessary and by the grace of God, the person from their past. Having received pardon and forgiveness by God, grace and pardon should be and must be shown to others.
10. Only when an unforgiving forgiving spirit is brought forth in the light can there be hope of walking in the light and loving with a pure unfeigned or undiluted love. *1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 1 Peter 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:*