

Forgiveness That Doesn't Save

Matthew 6:14-18

We are continuing in Matthew 6, and Jesus makes a powerful statement in verses 14 and 15...

""Matthew 6:14-15 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.""

So many people when they hear these verses automatically think this is talking about eternal salvation. They think "If I don't forgive others then God will not forgive me and I'm going to die and go to hell if I haven't forgiven everyone in my life". But is this passage saying you're going to die and go to hell if you don't forgive others? We have to read the Word of God carefully and rightly divide the word of truth.

We are going to prove, using the Bible, that these verses are not talking about eternal salvation. Just because it says your Father will not forgive your trespasses does not mean you are now going to hell because you have not forgiven others. Is forgiving others a good thing? Yes, it is a good thing to forgive others and Jesus commands us to do it. But it has nothing to do with being saved.

People have an obsession with adding things to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We know what the gospel is because it's defined for us throughout scripture.

""1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; **2** By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. **3** For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; **4** And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: ""

The gospel is a very simple message. It's all about what Jesus did for us. Not what we do for Jesus or other people.

He died... He was Buried... He rose again according to the scriptures.

""Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. ""

Does it say eternal life is through Jesus Christ with a little help from us? Absolutely not! Jesus doesn't need our help, nor could we ever have a part in our salvation because we are sinners worthy of death and we have zero righteousness outside of Christ.

""2 Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.""

For some reason, people want to make salvation harder than it actually is. Imagine if someone offered to give you 1 billion dollars at the end of the year, But the **ONLY** way they would give it to you is if you simply receive the 1 billion as a free gift with no strings attached. They won't accept anything in return. You just have to take it. And then imagine the time comes for you to get the 1 billion dollars at the end of the year. You go to the person and you say to them, "While I was waiting, I decided to remove one of my eyes, an arm, a leg, and one of my kidneys to give to you in return for the 1 billion.

That person is going to look at you and say, "Are you crazy? I said the only way you can have the money is if you take it for free with no strings attached." And then they send you away empty handed and give the money to someone else that receives it for nothing in return.

That's literally how people respond to the gospel today. They try to add to the finished work of Jesus Christ. They try to give something that is not required and will not be accepted by God as a payment. God only accepts one thing as a payment for your sin. The blood of Jesus Christ.

""1 Peter 1:18-21 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; **19 But with the precious blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: **20** Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, **21** Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.""

Faith, believing, or trusting in Jesus Christ is what saves us and how we obtain eternal life. God will never contradict himself in His Word. Look at one of the simplest verses on how to be saved...

""John 6:47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. ""

People have heard this countless times, but they still don't understand the weight that this verse holds and how simple the gospel is, so let's break it down.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you,"—means this is the truth. This is fact. And we know it's true because it's coming from God himself who cannot lie.

"He that believeth on me **hath**"—Hath means to have in the present tense, right now, in this very moment.

"everlasting life."—You have life that never ends right now if you believe, or put all your trust in Jesus Christ.

It doesn't say "He that believeth on me and forgives others hath everlasting life." It says he that **believeth**.

So we know without a shadow of a doubt that believing is all that is required to be saved and go to Heaven when we die. If we go to any other verse in the Bible that you think is adding another requirement to being saved, I promise you it's not talking about eternal salvation or you're not understanding the context.

For example if we read...

""**Matthew 6:15** But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.""

...And we say, "See, you must forgive men their trespasses or your Father will not forgive you and send you to hell" then we have just contradicted what Jesus said in John 6:47 and the scriptures would be broken and God would be made out to be a liar, but we know that God cannot lie, therefore John 6:47 is always true and Matthew 6:15 is not talking about eternal salvation.

In the same way that people misread Matthew 6:15 and think they must *forgive others* to earn salvation, many also believe they must *ask God for forgiveness* in order to be saved. This sounds humble and sincere, but it's not the gospel. The Bible never says, "Ask God to forgive you and you'll be saved."

It says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Asking for forgiveness is not the same as believing the gospel.

While out soul winning this past week, a 70 year old lady told me that she was taught that she had to ask God to forgive her every night to make sure she did not go to hell. She said she believed in Jesus...but she also had to ask forgiveness. So I had to explain to her that asking for forgiveness does not save you.

For example: Let's say a man got really mad one day and killed someone in cold blood. When the man went before a judge to be sentenced he begged the judge to forgive him. Even though the man asked for forgiveness he still committed a crime that must be paid for. The judge rightfully sentences the man to the death penalty for taking another person's life.

Being sorry and asking forgiveness did not help this man because breaking the law always carries a penalty that must be paid.

In the same manner, breaking God's law carries a punishment of death and hell. However, Jesus paid our penalty for us. If you ask God to forgive you and you don't completely believe or trust in the payment that Jesus paid for you, then asking forgiveness does absolutely nothing.

The Bible gives us examples of people who were *sorry*, who *admitted their sin*, and even *asked for forgiveness*, but were **not saved**—because they lacked **faith**.

Asking For Forgiveness Does Not = Salvation

I want to look at a few of these examples and we can see that asking for forgiveness does not equal salvation.

Esau

Esau is an example of someone who expressed grief and regret, but never turned to God in faith.

""**Hebrews 12:16-17** Lest there *be* any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. **17** For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.""

Esau wanted the blessing, but did not want the God that gives the blessing. His sorrow and grief did not help him obtain mercy because there was no faith involved.

Judas Iscariot

Another example of someone who was sorrowful and regretted their sins was Judas Iscariot.

""**Matthew 27:3-5** Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, **repented himself**, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, **4** Saying, **I have sinned** in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is *that* to us? see thou *to that*. **5** And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.""

Judas repented of what he did to Jesus. He was sorrowful, and admitted that he had sinned. But he never believed that Jesus paid for his sins. He did not have saving faith, therefore his sorrow and grief did not lead to eternal forgiveness. And we know that Judas is unfortunately in hell.

""**Acts 1:20** For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.""

When we go to the book of Psalms we can find the exact place that this is prophesied:

""**Psalm 69:25-28** Let their habitation be desolate; *and* let none dwell in their tents. **26** For they persecute *him* whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded. **27** Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them **not come into thy righteousness**. **28** Let them be **blotted out of the book of the living**, and not be written with the righteous.""

Pharaoh

I want to look at one more biblical example of someone that admits their sin and even asks for forgiveness, but it does not lead to salvation.

""**Exodus 10:12-19** And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, *even* all that the hail hath left. **13** And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all *that* night; *and* when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts... **16** Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, **I have sinned against the LORD your God**, and against you. **17** Now therefore **forgive**, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and intreat the LORD your God, that he may take away from me this death only. **18** And he went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the LORD. **19** And the LORD turned a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red sea; there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt.""

""**Exodus 10:20** But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go.""

So even though Pharaoh admitted his sin and asked to be forgiven, he did not repent and put his faith in God. The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, but Pharaoh hardened his own heart first. Pharaoh is a **clear** biblical example of someone who asked for mercy but was never saved—because he **never believed**.

""**2 Corinthians 7:10** For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.""

In all of these examples, these people had sorrow, but it wasn't godly sorrow. It was sorrow of the world which worketh death. Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation which means you change your mind and put all your faith and belief in Jesus Christ.

Eternal Forgiveness of Sins is Always Accompanied by Faith

Those are examples to show that asking for forgiveness does not equal being saved. Now I want to show you some examples of people being forgiven of their sins, but not because they asked forgiveness.

The Paralyzed Man

""**Luke 5:17-25** And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was *present* to heal them. **18** And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought *means* to bring him in, and to lay *him* before him. **19** And when they could not find by what *way* they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the

tiling with *his* couch into the midst before Jesus. **20** And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. **21** And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? **22** But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? **23** Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? **24** But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. **25** And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God."

This is an awesome example of seeing how eternal forgiveness for sins is always accompanied by faith. You must believe to be forgiven. These men did not ask God to forgive them. Jesus immediately forgave them because of their faith. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.

The Sinful Woman at Simon's House

Let's look at another example of eternal forgiveness of sins being accompanied by faith.

"Luke 7:36-50 And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. **37** And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, **38** And stood at his feet behind *him* weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe *them* with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed *them* with the ointment. **39** Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw *it*, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman *this* is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. **40** And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. **41** There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. **42** And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? **43** Simon answered and said, I suppose that *he*, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. **44** And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head. **45** Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. **46** My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. **47** Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loveth little. **48** And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. **49** And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? **50** And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

So this is a powerful picture of someone who was deeply sinful but fully forgiven. Not because of what she did, but because of what she believed. Jesus makes it abundantly clear in verse 50 **"Thy faith hath saved thee"**. Her outward acts of love and worship were evidence of the forgiveness she had already received through faith.

Forgiveness of Sins Through Faith

Those are two awesome examples that show that forgiveness requires faith. Asking God to forgive you does not equal salvation. You must believe in the sacrifice that Jesus made to be forgiven.

""Acts 13:38-39 Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the **forgiveness of sins**: **39** And by him **all that believe are justified from all things**, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. ""

""Acts 26:16-18 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; **17** Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, **18** To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they **may receive forgiveness of sins**, and inheritance among them which are sanctified **by faith that is in me**.""

Do you receive forgiveness of sins when you ask for forgiveness? You receive forgiveness when you have faith in Jesus Christ.

Relational Forgiveness. Not Eternal Salvation

So we see without a shadow of a doubt that you are forgiven the moment you believe in Jesus.

Now let's go back to our main passage and answer a few questions:

""Matthew 6:14-15 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.""

So what is this talking about if it's not saying you are going to hell if you don't forgive others.

""Colossians 2:12-13 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* **through the faith** of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. **13** And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having **forgiven you all trespasses**;""

So you are forgiven all your trespasses, through faith. That's what it says right there. But let's say someone wrongs you after you are saved and you don't forgive them for what they did. Does that mean you are no longer forgiven? Some people would say, "You are no longer forgiven for all your sins, and you will go to hell if you don't forgive." But we know that is a lie.

""**Ephesians 1:13-14** In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, **14** Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.""

The bible says we are sealed, and we can never lose everlasting life once we have it. So Matthew 6:14-15 is clearly talking about something else. It's not talking about our salvation. So what is it talking about?

When you got saved, you were **forgiven all trespasses**—past, present, and future. But as a child of God, when you hold bitterness or refuse to forgive, you're not losing salvation—you're breaking fellowship with your Father.

""**Ephesians 4:30-32** And **grieve not** the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. **31** Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: **32** And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, **forgiving one another**, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.""

So we can grieve the holy spirit of God who is inside of us if we choose to walk in the flesh. Imagine being in a relationship where you are constantly causing the other person to have grief and sorrow. That would not be a good relationship.

We all have a choice to make every single day. Are you going to walk in the spirit or walk in the flesh? You can walk in the spirit and please your Father in Heaven, or you can walk in the flesh and grieve the spirit of God in you.

There are consequences if we choose to live after the flesh.

""**Romans 8:8-13** So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. **9** But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. **10** And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. **11** But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. **12** Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13 For if ye live after the flesh, **ye shall die**: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.""

""**1 Corinthians 3:16-17** Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? **17** If any man defile the temple of God, **him shall God destroy**; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are. ""

If someone has done wrong to you in your life and they ask for forgiveness, Jesus commands us to forgive them because he has forgiven us. Think about all the wicked things that we do as human beings. The moment we put our faith in Jesus Christ, all of that sin is forgiven forever.

We are completely undeserving of that forgiveness therefore we have no right to withhold forgiveness from others.

And if we don't forgive others, God is not going to deal kindly with us. He is going to chasten and correct us as His sons and daughters. I want to look at one final passage where Jesus teaches his disciples about forgiveness.

""Matthew 18:21-35 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? **22** Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. **23** Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. **24** And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. **25** But 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.

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. **27** Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. **28** But 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. **29** And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. **30** And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. **31** So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. **32** Then 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: **33** Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? **34** And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. **35** So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.""

So we see the servant who was forgiven much, but refused to forgive a little, ended up being tormented. He was not cast out of the kingdom, but he was disciplined by the very one who had shown him mercy.

So Matthew 6:14-15 is not about losing salvation. It's about broken fellowship, chastening, and the consequences of holding on to unforgiveness.

Closing Thoughts

1. Forgiving others does not save us from hell, so do not try to add it to the gospel. The only thing we must do to be saved is believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Asking God to forgive you does not mean you are saved. You are eternally forgiven the moment you put your faith in the gospel. Believing that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again to pay for all your sins.
3. We must forgive others if we want to maintain a good relationship with our Father in Heaven. If you don't forgive, do not expect God's protection and blessings in your life. We need to be merciful the same way that God was merciful to us.

So let's go from here today with a humble heart, forgiving those who have sinned against us. Walking in the spirit of God, and pointing people to the only savior, Jesus Christ. Lets pray.