

Lesson 46 - The Character of Forgiveness

1. Who are we to forgive? **Colossians 3:13, Ephesians 4:32**

EGW: Every man, woman, and youth has an influence upon others. This influence we have from God. It flows from God to the human agent, and we are responsible for its use. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity (love), which is the bond of perfectness." Will we consider that this pure, unselfish love, one toward another, is the bond of perfectness in character? "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him. {1888 1509.2}

2. In following Jesus' example, who ought we forgive? **Luke 23:34**

EGW: The Saviour made no murmur of complaint. His face remained calm and serene, but great drops of sweat stood upon His brow. There was no pitying hand to wipe the death dew from His face, nor words of sympathy and unchanging fidelity to stay His human heart. While the soldiers were doing their fearful work, Jesus prayed for His enemies, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." His mind passed from His own suffering to the sin of His persecutors, and the terrible retribution that would be theirs. No curses were called down upon the soldiers who were handling Him so roughly. No vengeance was invoked upon the priests and rulers, who were gloating over the accomplishment of their purpose. Christ pitied them in their ignorance and guilt. He breathed only a plea for their forgiveness,--"for they know not what they do." {DA 744.2}

3. Who are we shewing to others when we forgive? **2 Corinthians 2:10**

EGW: (no comment)

4. Where is forgiveness to come from? **Matthew 18:34-35**

EGW: In the parable the lord summoned the unmerciful debtor, and "said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me; shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him." "So likewise," said Jesus, "shall My Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." He who refuses to forgive is thereby casting away his own hope of pardon. {COL 247.1}

5. What type of heart ought we to have to help us have the spirit of forgiveness? **Proverbs 8:5**

EGW: We must have faith in the Scriptures. All who are pressing forward to the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, will see and feel the necessity of having humble thoughts of themselves, and praying earnestly for wisdom from Jesus, that they may have an understanding heart to believe and live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. As this faith does not originate with ourselves, but is the gift of God, it will be constantly given to all who seek for it earnestly and prayerfully. {ST, October 12, 1891 par. 9}

6. What can the lack of showing forgiveness leave one to be swallowed up by? **2 Corinthians 2:7**

EGW: All such He will freely forgive. He says, "I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow." Jeremiah 31:13. {SJ 60.7}

7. In addition to forgiveness, what are we to bring to those that are forgiven? **2 Corinthians 2:7**

EGW: Just as soon as you commit sin, you should flee to the throne of grace, and tell Jesus all about it. You should be filled with sorrow for sin, because through sin you have weakened your own spirituality, grieved the heavenly angels, and wounded and bruised the loving heart of your Redeemer. When you have asked Jesus in contrition of soul for His forgiveness, believe that He has forgiven you. Do not doubt His divine mercy or refuse the comfort of His infinite love.--Bible Echo, Feb. 1, 1892. (Discourse at Melbourne, Australia, Dec. 19, 1891.) {3SM 196.3}

8. What ought the forgiven feel or sense being? **Romans 4:7**

EGW: Sinners are committed for trial. They must answer to the charge of transgressing God's law. Their only hope is to accept Christ, their Substitute. He has redeemed the fallen race from the curse of the law, having been made sin--a curse--for mankind. Nothing but his grace is sufficient to free the transgressor from bondage. And by the grace of Christ all who are obedient to God's commandments are made free. {AU Gleaner, August 19, 1903 par. 7}

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." {AU Gleaner, August 19, 1903 par. 8}

9. What is the person you forgive supposed to do before the forgiveness? **Luke 17:3**

EGW: Too often when wrongs are committed again and again, and the wrongdoer confesses his fault, the injured one becomes weary, and thinks he has forgiven quite enough. But the Saviour has plainly told us how to deal with the erring: "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him." Luke 17:3. Do not hold him off as unworthy of your confidence. Consider "thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Galatians 6:1. {COL 249.1}

"If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him." Treat him and his errors as you wish God to treat you when you offend him. You should not say, as some have said, who ought to know better, "I do not think he feels humble enough. I do not think he feels his confession." What right have you to judge him, as if you could read the heart? The word of God says, "If he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." And not only seven times, but seventy times seven, should you forgive him, -- just as often as Christ forgives you. {HM, January 1, 1892 par. 20}

10. What are we to do with someone that really struggles at the repentance despite the honest effort? **Luke 17:4**

EGW: If a brother errs, forgive him if he asks you. If he is not humble enough to ask, forgive him in your heart, and express your forgiveness in word and action. Then the weight of his sin will not in any degree rest on you. "Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." "If he trespass against thee

seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." And we are not only to forgive seven times, but seventy times seven. Just as often as God forgives us, we are to forgive one another. {RH, April 8, 1902 par. 3}

11. What does our forgiveness from God depend upon? **Luke 11:4, Luke 6:37, Matthew 6:12, Matthew 6:14**

EGW: "And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." Few realize the true import of these words. After completing the Lord's Prayer, as given in the sixth chapter of Matthew, Jesus added, "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." He who is unforgiving cuts off the very channel through which alone he can receive mercy from God. However sorely we may have been wounded, we are not to cherish our grievances, and sympathize with ourselves over our injuries; but as we hope to be pardoned for our offenses against God, we are to pardon all who have done evil to us. {ST, March 29, 1905 par. 8}

12. What happens if we do not forgive someone? **Mark 11:26, Matthew 6:15**

EGW: "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Matthew 6:15. Nothing can justify an unforgiving spirit. He who is unmerciful toward others shows that he himself is not a partaker of God's pardoning grace. In God's forgiveness the heart of the erring one is drawn close to the great heart of Infinite Love. The tide of divine compassion flows into the sinner's soul, and from him to the souls of others. The tenderness and mercy that Christ has revealed in His own precious life will be seen in those who become sharers of His grace. But "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Romans 8:9. He is alienated from God, fitted only for eternal separation from Him. {COL 251.1}

13. How long should we forgive people? **Matthew 18:21-22**

EGW: Christ has died to save souls, and those who wear the yoke with Him will be copartners with Him, and will act in a Christlike manner. When a soul is in spiritual danger and falls from error into sin, such an one will not push him away, drive him to take desperate positions, and discourage him in every effort he may make to recover himself. Peter asked, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven" [Matthew 18:21, 22]. This is to make manifest the fact that

there is no limit to the forgiving love of Christ. {21MR 180.1}

14. With God as our example, what word shows that forgiveness is not just automatic but implying something else happens first, like possibly repentance? **Psalms 86:5**

EGW: How many dishonor God by hardness of heart. We live from day to day, dependent upon the mercy of God. We must seek continually for forgiveness, and yet how reluctant we are to forgive others! Should Christ deal with us in as heartless a manner as we deal with one another, there would be no hope for us. No provocation can be so grievous as to authorize us to harbor feelings of dislike, of resentment, and retaliation. How grievous to the Lord has been our continual transgression. Think how entirely dependent we are upon Him, the continual recipients of His beneficence and mercy, and yet doing continually those things that are not pleasing in His sight. But does He cast us off? No, He bears with our perversity, and is ever ready to forgive us when we see our mistakes and errors, when we repent and humble ourselves before Him. Should the Lord keep a reckoning with us, what a debt would appear against us! But we can say every day, "Thy gentleness hath made me great." {13MR 75.2}

15. What is a synonym for forgiveness using the phrase from Psalms 86:5, "Ready to Forgive"? **Nehemiah 9:17**

EGW: Do you feel that you are taking a step down, that it is humiliating to be a follower of Jesus? Ever since I was eleven years old, I have felt that the greatest thing I could think of, and that I could strive to obtain, was the forgiveness of my sins. I believed that I would receive pardon from the One who promised it to me. And he is ready to pardon every one of you. Christ has promised to take away our sins, if we will come to him in faith. His pardon is for us. {GCB, April 23, 1901 par. 9}

16. In requesting forgiveness, what should be confessed between the parties involved? **James 5:16**

EGW: The apostle says, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." James 5:16. Confess your sins to God, who only can forgive them, and your faults to one another. If you have given offense to your friend or neighbor, you are to acknowledge your wrong, and it is his duty freely to forgive you. Then you are to seek the forgiveness of God, because the brother you have wounded is the property of God, and in injuring him you have sinned against his Creator. . . . {OFC 72.6}

True confession is always of a specific character, and acknowledges particular sins. They may be of such a nature as to be brought before God only; they may be wrongs that should be confessed to individuals who have suffered injury through them; or they may be of a public character, and should then be as publicly confessed. But all confession should be definite and to the point, acknowledging the very sins of which you are guilty. {OFC 73.1}

17. When proper confession and repentance occurs, what ought to be the result to the confessor?
Galatians 6:1

EGW: Many appear to be steadfast in the truth, firm, decided on every point of our faith; yet there is a great lack in them,—the tenderness and love which marked the character of the great Pattern. If a brother errs from the truth, if he falls into temptation, they make no effort to restore him in meekness, considering themselves lest they also be tempted. They seem to regard it as their special work to climb upon the judgment seat and condemn and disfellowship. They do not obey God's word, which says, "Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." The spirit of this passage is altogether too rare in our churches. It is the lack of it that shuts out the Spirit of God from the heart, from the home, from the church. Shall we not henceforth practice the Bible plan of restoring erring ones in the spirit of meekness? Shall we not have the spirit of Jesus, and work as he worked? {RH, December 16, 1884 par. 9}

18. If a person confesses their sins that they committed against us, what character aspects should we copy from Jesus in our forgiveness towards that person? **1 John 1:9**

EGW: Behold Christ. Dwell upon his love and mercy. This will fill the soul with abhorrence for all that is sinful, and will inspire it with an intense desire for the righteousness of Christ. The more clearly we see the Saviour, the more clearly shall we discern our defects of character. Confess your sins to Christ, and with true contrition of soul co-operate with him by putting these sins away. Believe that they are pardoned. The promise is positive, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Be assured that the word of God will not fail. He who has promised is faithful. It is as much your duty to believe that God will fulfil his word and forgive you as it is to confess your sins. {RH, February 28, 1907 par. 5}

19. What are we bestowing upon someone that we forgive as Jesus bestows upon us? **Ephesians 1:7**
[Last word in the verse]

EGW: It is sin in some form that brings variance and disunion. The affections need transforming, a personal experience of the renewing power of Christ must be obtained. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." {1888 1008.1}

20. Who should appreciate our forgiveness even more than any other? **Luke 7:40-43**

EGW: When Satan comes to tell you that you are a great sinner, look up to your Redeemer and talk of His merits. That which will help you is to look to His light. Acknowledge your sin, but tell the enemy that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" and that you may be saved by His matchless love. 1 Timothy 1:15. Jesus asked Simon a question in regard to two debtors. One owed his lord a small sum, and the other owed him a very large sum; but he forgave them both, and Christ asked Simon which debtor would love his lord most. Simon answered, "He to whom he forgave most." Luke 7:43. We have been great sinners, but Christ died that we might be forgiven. The merits of His sacrifice are sufficient to present to the Father in our behalf. Those to whom He has forgiven most will love Him most, and will stand nearest to His throne to praise Him for His great love and infinite sacrifice. It is when we most fully comprehend the love of God that we best realize the sinfulness of sin. When we see the length of the chain that was let down for us, when we understand something of the infinite sacrifice that Christ has made in our behalf, the heart is melted with tenderness and contrition. {SC 35.4}