

"And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds." (Acts 19:18)

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

"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." (James 5:16)

Can we be More Gracious than God? ABSOLUTELY NOT!

It is obvious from the passages reviewed above, that God requires confession and repentance **before** He administers His forgiving grace. It is also obvious that others cannot receive our forgiveness if they do not ask for it.

Therefore, per our example above, the person who made the false accusations **must repent** before they are in a position to **receive forgiveness**. This repentance must come whether they knowingly or unknowingly made the false accusations.

1. **The Accusations Were Made Knowingly:**

In this case, the false accuser made the accusations knowing that they were not true. God's **abounding grace is available!** However, the accuser will never receive God's grace without true heart-rending repentance. The accuser must repent before God, before the person that they lied about, and they must attempt to make things right with everyone that their lies have tainted.

2. **The Accusations Were Made Believing That They Were True:**

In this case, the false accuser made the accusations believing that they were true. Once again, God's **abounding grace is available!** However, the misled ac-

cusor will never receive God's grace without true heart-rending repentance. The deceived accuser must repent before God, before the person that they falsely accused, and they must attempt to make things right with everyone that their lies have tainted.

You Must Make Things Right!

It is not sufficient to just ask God for forgiveness; that is the place to start, but it does not end there! (Refer to 1 John 1:9 quoted previously.)

You must confess your sins to each other in order to be reconciled. (Refer to James 5:16 quoted previously.)

If your sin has impacted others, you must try and correct the damage that you have done. As evident from Proverbs 26:20-22 quoted below, talebearers cause much strife. These Proverbs also demonstrate how to deal with the strife; remove the talebearer.

"Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. (21) As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. (22) The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly." (Proverbs 26:20-22)

Conclusion:

If the sinner is unrepentant, there is **NO FORGIVENESS!** God does not freely give grace to the unrepentant... He pours His grace out on those with a humble and broken heart.

On the part of the one who was sinned against, they **MUST WATCH** their heart before God and repent before God for any animosity or bitterness that they have. They also need to be ready to forgive **if the sinner repents and asks to be forgiven!**

No Repentance = No Forgiveness

ChristLife



By: Robert W. Dallmann

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"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." (Matthew 6:14-15)

"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



NO REPENTANCE = NO FORGIVENESS

brother their trespasses."
(Matthew 18:31-35)

The above passages (and others) have always been very sobering.

The first verses quoted, immediately follow the "Amen" in the Lord's Prayer. Also something important to note is that this is the **only** part of the Lord's Prayer where Jesus finds it necessary to provide commentary and clarification.

The second section of verses is in the context of the proper procedure for dealing with an offending brother and Peter's question of "How many times should I forgive my brother, seven times?" This is the story that Jesus tells of the lord who completely forgave one servant an insurmountable debt. That servant then had a fellow servant thrown in prison for a small debt. The lord heard what had been done and he recalled the first servant's debt and delivered him to the tormentors until he paid it all back (an impossible task.)

What is very important to note is that verse 35 marks the end of the parable and the beginning of Jesus' commentary regarding it. This is clear from the transitional words "So likewise" followed by Jesus' reference to His heavenly Father.

It is critical to accept that when Jesus explains a parable that His explanation is the **only valid explanation!** Jesus clearly teaches that when forgiveness or grace is requested, we must be gracious. If we do not forgive people from our hearts, God will recall our debts and deliver us to the tormentors until we pay back everything that is owed (an impossible task.)

As Christians, we should be ever thankful for the fact that **Jesus paid our debt for us!** God has forgiven us insurmountable debts. We could never pay for our sins. We have been forgiven much and therefore, we should forgive much.

In light of Jesus' explanation of the above referenced parable, what could un-forgiveness mean to us? Would God recall our debt? Would He turn us over to the tormentors? You will have to struggle with these questions between Jesus and yourself. After all, Jesus was the One Who clarified the parable.

No matter what your doctrinal position on this passage, **the severity of un-forgiveness cannot be disputed!** Un-forgiveness is a cancer that will destroy your spiritual life.

Another Aspect of Forgiveness: **Can we be More Gracious than God?**

In modern Christianity there seems to be an unspoken (and probably not even understood) idea that we should be more gracious and more forgiving than God. **How can this be?** What does this mean?

The scenario goes something like this:

- Someone does something terrible to you. Perhaps they broke the commandment that tells us not to bear false witness against a neighbor and they made false accusations against you. Perhaps they even believed that these statements were true at the time.
- The accusations were proven to be false. Modern Christianity then wants the one who was falsely accused to forgive the accuser.

Unfortunately the above scenario skips a critical step and wants the person sinned against to be more gracious and forgiving than God. This important step requires **repentance** and a **request of forgiveness** on the part of the false accuser.

Think about it, if a person does **not repent, asking God for forgiveness** does God forgive them and allow them into Heaven? Of course not! If He would do that, there would have been no reason for Jesus to go to the Cross.

Take note of this in regards to the passages referenced above. The first passage is in the context of the Lord's Prayer. Matthew 6:12 shows Jesus teaching His disciples to ask God for forgiveness and in the same context says that they should forgive others. Is it reasonable to assume that God requires us to **ask** Him for forgiveness but expects us to forgive someone who is unrepentant and **does not ask for forgiveness?** Really, is it possible for us to be **more gracious than God?**

*"And **forgive us** our debts, as we forgive our debtors." (Matthew 6:12)*

In the passage from Matthew 18 we see both servants **asking for grace**. Each one sought more time to pay back their debts. If the first servant would not have **asked for grace**, he would not have had his massive debt forgiven. The lord forgave the debt **after** the request was made.

Forgiving grace is never given in the Bible without repentance and a request for forgiveness. Here are a few additional examples of this biblical doctrine.