

## THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS (859)

**Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemes they utter; but whoever blasphemes the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of eternal sin, (Mark 3:28, 29).**

When we read that God's forgiveness not only has the power to accomplish His divine will, which is what is meant from the cover, the fascinating thing that I learned from this study was that His forgiveness can also empower us to be used by Him to accomplish His will as well. I believe now that the true forgiveness that we offer an offended party or even greater yet, a party that has offended us, frees us from a prison that unforgiveness can keep us incarcerated. These prisons are erected by viewing our life through the glasses of our own self centeredness and we are only thinking inward about ourselves and not outward toward God and others. We should allow God to **Guide Our Direction.** There are various prisons that can keep us from an effective witness and our lack of forgiveness needs to be included in this list. I am now convinced and convicted that unforgiveness, especially toward a party that has offended us can keep us in a prison and a desire for revenge or vengeance is the lock that keeps us there. If we read Acts 12:5-11 these verses can be a metaphor for the freedom that we can feel from this self-made prison. Using these verses as a metaphor we understand the prison is our unforgiveness and the chains are the desire for vengeance, the angel is the Holy Spirit who has come to convict us of our unforgiveness and lead us out of this spiritual immobilization of growth and relationship with God that unconfessed sin can cause us to experience. Herod is our spiritual executioner that causes spiritual death as a result of an unforgiving heart and a desire to see our own revenge take place. Here in the form of a metaphor is how this verse might read: *So there I was, kept in this prison of my own choosing, condemning myself to live in a state of unforgiveness, but unknown to me, while I was in this condition, prayer was being made for me fervently by the church of God. And on the very night, when my spiritual death was getting a grip on me, the condition I was in that was causing me to lose sleep, because I was in the fetters that were created by the desire to take revenge, as the spiritual enemy waiting patiently over me, was about to change. When behold, the Holy Spirit of God spoke to me through my conscience, convicting me of my condition and then He showed me the light of Jesus Christ that had a desire to shine in my heart. As this was happening the Holy Spirit exhorted me to take a look at the power of forgiveness as compared to the powerlessness of my spiritual death that I was choosing to remain in. And the chains of vengeance fell off my hands, as the Holy Spirit said to me "bind and gird yourself for freedom," and I did so. He continued to instruct me to wrap myself in the security of God's sovereign will and follow the example that He gave to me in His Son. And I made the choice to obey Him and where He desired me to go I followed. I wasn't sure where He was leading me, but I was sure that He was giving me a vision of my future life. After we passed all of the areas of my life that I needed to express my forgiveness, including the temptations of my flesh, losing sleep over plotting, scheming, and strategizing on, not how to get even, but how to damage them more than the perceived damage they had done to me, I felt like I had acquired a new found freedom and the issues I had with unforgiveness that I thought were important to me were automatically taken away. Then I came to the realization that it was only by the power of God's forgiveness that I could attain this freedom and I was at that time rescued from my spiritual enemy, an inevitable spiritual death, and all of the influences that lead me to consider seeking revenge.*

The real eye opener for me that came as a result of this study, was God's revealing to me that the party that offended me needed me to forgive them just as much as I needed to forgive them and they also benefitted from my ability, through the strength of Christ, to forgive just as much as I benefitted from my willingness to forgive. This forgiveness is a living testimony of the omnipotence of God working in my life, because without the power of God's forgiveness, I would not have been able to forgive anyone and hopefully that witness is working in their life as well.

I believe now that when God offers us a gift, such as the gifts mentioned in the fruit of the Spirit, He doesn't expect us to keep them to ourselves, to hoard like a child might want to keep all of its toys for itself. But we are to make these gifts a part of our attitudes and values that we express to others as a Christian. For example love; the Bible says in 1 John that "we love because He first loved us." In other words have the capacity to love because He has given us the gift of love. He gave us the gift of peace because he expects us to give other the gift of peace by being peacemakers and bring peace to a situation where none exists, as far as we are able. The same is true concerning forgiveness, we have the capacity and the responsibility, and we will be held accountable, to forgive others because He first forgave us of our transgressions, of our breaking relationship with Him, of our choosing to take vengeance rather than to forgive. To hoard the gift of forgiveness or any other gift for ourselves would be an abuse of His gift and evidence that our relationship with Him is not an appropriate one. To a lesser degree it is like us as taxpayers paying our tax for our government to function, but instead the tax collector kept it for himself. It would be insane for us to believe that he is going to continue to bless us with these gifts, if He knows that we are not going to use them appropriately or sue them for His intended purpose. He did not forgive us and then tell us that it is not necessary to forgive others; actually he did quite the opposite. It is no different than for us to keep giving someone gifts, that we knew would only abuse our gift to them, or use our gift to their own detriment.

In these teachings about forgiveness I am giving to you my personal values that our Lord gave to me about my need to find and give forgiveness. And from these teachings my prayer would be that you might receive values and attitudes from our Lord also for your own personal use. I can't give you my values not should I expect you to take on my values, it would not be appropriate for you to have my values because all of us are in a little different place when it comes to finding forgiveness for others. That is not to say that my values are not good values, but just that any value we get about anything should come directly from Him. My prayer would be that you would be convicted by the Holy Spirit through these teachings and to seek from the Lord your values and that possibly through your searching we might both come to the same place, that is, to the place that our Lord desires us to be.

This study has come about because of a time in my life when a relationship that I had with someone caused me terrible grief accompanied with a desire for vengeance; and hence a strong desire for God to end the grief. In His calm voice He told me, in what seemed like in an audible voice, that if I truly desired to end my grief it was only a matter of finding true, honest forgiveness for that person. The total opposite of what my fleshly nature wanted to hear. In His obedience I did find it in my heart to forgive and He responded as promised. The next day the miracle of a ***"peace that surpasses all comprehension"*** became a permanent part of my life concerning this incident. The power of the freedom that I got from this experience has driven me to learn more about "the power of forgiveness."

Since wrongdoing spoils a relationship, forgiveness is necessary if the relationship is to be restored, in whatever manner that restoration may take place. Forgiveness does not mean pretending that some wrong doing did not happen. It means recognizing the wrong doing for what it is, and then in love forgiving it, forgetting it, and restoring the relationship with the forgiven person. **Hebrews 10:17-18;** ***“And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.*** Sometimes when we read a literal translation from the Greek to English it can be a little hard to understand all of the nuances of what the person was trying to say, because the English language has changed some from when the NT was written up to now. So let’s unpack these verses and take a look at what these words mean in today’s English. First of all, verse 17 is a quote from the OT in **Jeremiah 31:34**, in part, so for the translation of verse 17 we need to look at the OT Hebrew meaning of the words: *“in fact I will release them from their eternal punishment, and I will not recall their trespasses against God anymore.” And also where there is release of judgment from sins from the sinner there is the putting away of sin and the deliverance of the sinner from the power of sin and because of the offering and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ at Calvary, there is no longer any need for a continual offering of a sacrifice for punishment of our sin.* Let’s look at the Biblical definition of “forgiveness.” We see that the word comes from another Greek root word, forgive, that means to cause to stand away, to release one’s sins from the sinner. The word “forgive” is further defined as giving up of resentment or claim to requital on account of an offense. The offense may be a deprivation of a person’s property, rights, or honor; or it may be violation of moral law. On twelve occasions in the NT the word “forgiveness” is followed by the “sins”; therefore sins are the cords whereby man is bound away from God. When I think about this definition and apply it to my life I can see where my lack of forgiveness has given the other person power over me, that is, I was giving what power I had in my own strength, over to the person I was unwilling to forgive. Lack of forgiveness made me an emotional slave to the other person. While I was in this state of un-forgiveness I was consumed by this person in my thoughts and in my selfish desire to have revenge. I had allowed this person to hold me captive. It was only when I truly was able to forgive this person, from the deepest part of my heart, that I was able to break these chains that bound me to my selfish desire to see this person hurt as bad or worse than they hurt me. I was unwilling to release one’s sins from the sinner and by doing so I became a partaker in the sin and perpetuated that sinful condition and the relationship could not be restored.

The normal conditions of forgiveness are repentance and the willingness to make reparation, or atonement; and the effect of forgiveness is the restoration of both parties to the former state of relationship. This does not mean that if you had any kind of emotional ties to this person that those emotions need to be restored, but only that you change your position of one seeking justice for the other party, to one of seeing them as having respect for their redeemable qualities; those qualities that Christ has seen in you. Christ taught that forgiveness is a duty, and that no limit should be set to the extent of forgiveness (**Luke 17:4**), ***“And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, “I repent” forgive him (or you shall forgive him).”*** In a paraphrase translated from the Greek this verse is telling us; *Also, if you are in a situation in which a person whom you have a relationship with offends you seven times every day (for the purposes of illustration), and then, realizing that he was in error, comes back to you each of those seven times, to make himself right with God and to amend the relationship with you, uttering these significant words, “I repent” as evidence of his being*

regretful at what he had said or done, you shall dismiss his offense toward you, let go of the anger that you possess towards this man, no longer holding on to the offense and adopt the mindset that the incident never occurred.” If we truly forgive someone we cannot hold onto their offense for future reference or any other reason that we try to justify holding onto another person’s sin. In reality what we are doing in such a case is allowing the sin of the first party to become our property, of which we will, at some time, need to repent. An unforgiving spirit is one evidence of being in a state of sin by judgment and lack of love by being evidenced in self-centeredness, **Matt. 18:34, 35 “And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he would repay all that was owed him. So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”** This verse in a brief narrative translated from the Greek would tell us this: *So his master, himself, provoked to anger, delivered him over to his inquisitors who had the authority to inflict torture on him until he arranged to fulfill his obligation of debt that was due and he was expected to pay. “So will My heavenly Father also cause to come about to you, if under similar circumstances, each and anyone of you that does not willingly dismiss the offenses by those that you have any sort of a relationship with. Luke 15:28-30,”***But he became angry, and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began entreating him. But he answered and said to his father, ‘Look! For so many years I have been serving you, and I have never neglected a command (or disobeyed) of yours; and yet you have never given me a kid (or a young goat), that I might be merry with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth (or living) with harlots, you killed the fattened calf for him.’** In this verse it is easy to see that the obedient son has let the un-forgiveness of his heart, that is, the unwillingness to let go of any offense that the disobedient son has caused him, to keep him a captive in his sin of judgment. This verse in a short narrative would read like this; *And he allowed this news to arouse him to anger and vengeance. He used this as an excuse to not enter into the celebration; and so his father came out to him to console, comfort, and encourage him to join in the celebration. “But instead the obedient son took this opportunity, not to respond to his father’s invitation, but to address his feelings about his loyalty to his father and the feelings of injustice that he was feeling toward his father and his brother for the attention given to his disobedient son saying, Look! All of these many years I have been subjecting myself to serving you, obeying you, and I have never disobeyed any instructions that you have taught me; and yet you have never bestowed upon me not even as much as a baby goat, so that I could celebrate my goodness and loyalty with my friends; but when this disobedient, un-loyal son of yours decides to come back home, the one who has consumed your fortune that you and I have worked for, on prostitutes, you go out and butcher a fattened calf for him.’* The elder son would not accept his younger brother because he has associated himself with harlots although he repented of the sin and abandoned it. We, as Christians, and/or “followers of Christ by title,” sometimes act like the “older son” and not like “fathers” in the case of such prodigal sons and daughters whose sins of such associations are categorized by us as unforgivable.

The grounds of forgiveness by God of man’s sins, is the atoning death of Jesus Christ. Jesus taught that the offended party is, when necessary, to go to the offender and try to bring him to a position of having an opportunity to repent, **(Luke 17:3), Be on your guard or (take heed of yourselves)! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.** If we choose to dismiss this person from our life he will never have an opportunity to repent personally, which should be considered by Christians

as being more important than seeking justice. A paraphrase of the reading of this verse would sound like this: *You must pay attention to what I am about to say to you and live your life accordingly! If you find yourself in a situation or circumstance where someone you have a relationship with, brings to your attention that he has offended you by word, thought or deed, chastise him strongly, and if he expresses regret or sorrow sincerely in his heart for what he has said or done, you must just as fervently, from your heart, let go of the offense and the ill feelings that you possess towards him so that you can continue your relationship with him as if the offense never happened.* In the Christian life there is not only the peril of offending others. There is also the danger of harboring grudges, of refusing to forgive when an offending person apologizes. That is what the Lord deals with here. The NT teaches the following procedure in connection with this subject:

1. If a Christian is wronged by another Christian, he should first of all forgive the offender in his heart. This keeps his soul free from resentment and malice.
2. Then he should go to the offender privately and rebuke him. If he repents, then he should be told that he is forgiven. Even if he sins repeatedly, then says he repents, he should be forgiven.
3. If a private rebuke does not prove effective, then the person who has been wronged should take one of two witnesses. If he will not listen to these, then the matter should be taken before the church. Failure to hear the church should result in ex-communication.

The purpose of rebukes and other disciplinary action is not to get even or to humiliate the offender, but to restore him to fellowship with the Lord and with his brothers. All rebukes should be delivered in a spirit of love. We have no way of judging whether an offender's repentance is genuine. We must accept his own word that he has repented. This is why Jesus says: ***And if he sins against you seven times in one day, and in seven times in one day returns to you saying, "I repent," you shall forgive him.*** This is the gracious way that our Father treats us and we are expected to imitate Him. No matter how often we fail Him, we still have the assurance that: ***(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."*** A paraphrase of this verse could read like this: *if we are in a condition that the Holy Spirit has prompted us to concede our departure from what is right, true, and correct concerning our relationship with God, we can have confidence that He is worthy of belief, trust, and acts conformably to justice and morality without any deficiency or failure to let go of our departures from what is right, true, and correct concerning our relationship with Him and He has the justification to do so by His substitutive death which paid the penalty for our sins for us, and He will accordingly free us from the filth of the pollution and guilt of all wrongs and injustices we have perpetrated.* When we confess our sins, we must believe on the authority of the word of God that He forgives us of all of our sins. And if He forgives us of our sinful rebellion towards Him, which hold much greater consequences for us, then we must be willing to forgive ourselves and others. When say that we are unwilling to forgive ourselves what are really saying is that we cannot accept God's forgiveness toward us.

God's forgiveness is conditional upon man's forgiveness of wrongs done to him, ***(Matt 5:23, 24), If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering (or gift) there before the altar, and go your way; first be***

*reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. (Matt. 6:12), And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. (Col. 1:13, 14), For He delivered us from the domain (or authority) of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Col. 3:12, 13) And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience (Or forbearance) towards others; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.* If we breakdown the Greek meanings of the words used in Col. 3:12-13, in order to enhance Paul's encouragement toward us, it could read like this: *Your disposition should have these qualities if you are to live your life in the manner of being loved and cherished by God; you should be morally clean, pure, regarded with strong affection, and make visible your gentler emotions of compassion for the suffering of others, and make known your affections that are in the invisible parts of who you are, that is, your mind and soul; you should have the characteristic of the harmlessness of the dove while maintaining the wisdom of the serpent, keeping a correct assessment of yourselves as lowly, humble, accepting God's dealings with you and considering them good in that they enhance our relationship with Him, and practice self-restraint before proceeding to action, having the knowledge that we have the ability to avenge ourselves but we refrain from doing so; having patience with the errors of weaknesses of one another, and to graciously forgive each other and for whoever finds fault or blame against anyone; just as the Lord forgave your faults and weaknesses, you should also forgive others their faults and weaknesses.* Paul tells us in verse 10, which precedes these verses, that we are to "put on" a new self, or man. Now he gives us practical ways in which this can be done in our everyday lives. First of all, he refers to true Christians as the ones "chosen by God". This refers to the fact that we have been chosen by God in Christ before the foundation of the world. We believe the Scriptures clearly teach that God, in His sovereignty, has chosen men to belong to Christ. We do not believe that God has chosen anyone to be damned. But God does not save men against their will. When we say someone is "chosen" before the foundation of the world it is referring to God's foreknowledge, in which He also says, ***"whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*** Next Paul calls His chosen "holy and beloved." In this case "holy" means "set apart" to God from the world. We are positionally holy, and we should be practically holy in our lives as well. Because we are objects of God's love, it gives us a desire to please Him in every way. So Paul goes on to tell us how to be holy in a practical way. Have a heart of compassion, practice kindness, with an unselfish spirit, wanting to do for others. Have the willingness to esteem others while you desire to stay in the background unnoticed. And finally be patient with one another allow a person to be who they are by accepting them instead trying to make them as you would have created them. Creation is not our job and never will be.

As we go through this study we should keep in mind that we live in the New Covenant period and we, as Christians, are now God's chosen people and as His chosen people we are forgiven and are forgivers. Those who were forgiven by God before the Incarnation were forgiven because of Christ, whose death was foreordained from eternity. Christ's atonement was retroactive in effect as we read in Hebrews; ***(Heb. 11:40), God had provided (or foreseen) something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect.*** Looking at this verse in a brief narrative we could interpret this verse to say: *The Triune God had provided or knew beforehand that He had in mind a certain One that would be more useful for us, so that separate from us the OT saints should not be made out to be enjoying a*

*glorified body until we do, all of us together at the same time will enjoy a glorified body.* Jesus Christ was the same in the yesterday of the OT, as He is in the present day of the Gospel dispensation. He had a plan for our salvation since the foundation of the world, and the saints of the OT were saved just as the saints of the NT are saved, by His grace and righteousness. The only difference being that they had Christ as a promise, we have Him, Himself as promised. They had Him as a type or a shadow; we have Him in reality and truth. They believed in and were saved by Christ who was to come; we are saved and by Him that came. Hence our case is, with respect to these circumstances, better than theirs. They were as children under tutors and governors, and were under a spirit of bondage, but we are redeemed from under the law, and are cleared from its burdensome rites as well as its curse and condemnation and have a spirit of liberty and adoption. But the OT saints are perfectly justified, perfectly sanctified, and perfectly glorified. And, their perfection was not by the law, which made nothing perfect, but by Christ, and through His sacrifice, blood and righteousness, and so they were not made perfect without us, since their sins were expiated (atoned for) by the same sacrifice. The veil, that hung in the temple, (veil literally means “separation”), was hung between the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place. Its function was to separate man, even the priests, from the presence of God. Only one man, the high priest, went beyond that veil and he was permitted to do so only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. His purpose was to take the blood of the bull and the goat for his sins and the sins of the people. The meaning was clear—man was separated from God by reason of his sin and could approach Him only through the blood which was presented by a priest. When Jesus died on the cross the veil hanging in the temple was torn in two. Jesus went beyond the veil as a high priest, taking His own blood, and making full atonement, not only for the sinners of that present day, not only for the sinners of the future, but also for all of the sinners that had died before Him. They were justified together with us by the same righteousness. They and we make up the same church. Jews and Gentiles alike will together be glorified in souls and body to eternity.

Man, being a sinner, had more than spoiled his relationship with God; he has also fallen under God’s judgment. He is therefore in need of God’s forgiveness if he is to escape that judgment, **(Rom. 3:23-24), for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ** . When we define these words from Greek to English it could read like this: *When it comes to sinning, there is not a distinction among men because everyone of us has missed the mark when it comes to having a perfect relationship with God and all of us have failed to obtain His divine favor and fall short of the true recognition of God; the only way that we were made righteous in the eyes of God, was through an undeserved gift, that is, we were forgiven of our sin and reconciled to God, only through His favor and good will toward men that delivered us free from sin through the ransom He paid, which freed us from the consequences of our sin. And what was the ransom that was paid? Christ laying down His life for those who believe.* God alone can grant this forgiveness, **Mark 2:7, “Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone”. Mark 2:10, “But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”**. If we define these words in Mark 2:7 from the Greek text it would read like this: *For what reason does this man teach that way? He is wounding God’s reputation by teaching that He can forgive sins; there is no one man who has the power of his own ability and resources to pardon one from the consequences of his sin except the One God.* **Mark 2:10, So that you may understand that the Son of Man**

has the power and authority here on earth to pardon man from the consequences of his sin. **(Acts 5:31), He is the One whom (by) God exalted to His right hand as a Prince (or Leader) and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins**, but sinful man is in no position to demand forgiveness of Him. No person has a *right* to forgiveness. Forgiveness is possible only because of the grace of God—the mercy that He exercises towards man even though man does not deserve it; **(Psalm 78:38), Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to Thy greatness of Thy loving kindness, just as Thou also hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now ; But He, being compassionate, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them; and often He restrained His anger, and did not arouse all His wrath, (Rom. 5:20), And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded even more. Titus 3:3-7, For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful; hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior that once being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope, (or of eternal life according to hope)of eternal life** . These words of Titus tell us about the condition we were in before we accepted God's grace and mercy that changed our lives, after we realized through the conviction of His Holy Spirit who we were and asked for His forgiveness. When we read the Greek words and define them again in English it would read like this: *Because we too were at one time or another, ones who did not govern our lusts ourselves, that is, we lived to satisfy our fleshly desires. And we were unwilling to be persuaded to change as we were being seduced to go astray, being in bondage to various desires of inordinate appetites that give our flesh pleasure. We were consumed with passing time in our life thinking of ways of endeavoring to do evil to others and it pained us to think about others who were happy or successful. We were being hateful, actively speaking and doing things of ill will towards one another. But at the time when the goodness and kindness of God our Savior, the One that has saved us from the eternal consequences of who we were and the danger or destruction of our eternal destination, and in His work in our salvation showed Himself openly to all of mankind, He saved us from eternal loss, destruction and danger. Not on the basis of our performance of our works which we have done, even the ones done in conformity to the claims of God's authority, but on the basis that is according to His compassion for us, by the means of the cleansing us of our sin and the spiritual rebirth of our soul, that is, our character that defines who we are and the renewing of our identity, that is, who we are in Christ, which makes us different from who we were in the past. He did this by means of and through the Holy Spirit, whom He gives generously and pours out richly to those who will receive Him, by means of Jesus Christ our Deliverer, Preserver, and the One that saves us from the danger and destruction of eternal condemnation and brings us into a state of prosperity and happiness; the One who is the Savior of all men, who saves people from the guilt and power of sin and from eternal death, from the punishment and misery as the consequence of sin, and gives them eternal life and blessedness in His kingdom, that being declared to be right and proper, virtuous and good by the means of His absolutely free expression of the loving kindness to men, finding its only motive in the bounty and benevolence of God as exhibited in the pardon of sins and admission to the divine kingdom. So that we might be made heirs of eternal life and that we shall have a desire for something good and have expectations of obtaining it, handed over to us. If we are to be Christ-like, as the Gospel of Our Lord demands of us, then*



these true statements about forgiveness can begin to make us feel a little uncomfortable when we begin to realize our necessity to receive forgiveness for who we are in our sin and also to forgive others that have offended us. Good works do not earn salvation; they are the result of salvation. Wherever there is true salvation there will also be good works. So we read that God did not save us because of works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy. Salvation is a work of mercy—not justice. Justice demands that the deserved punishment be administered; mercy provides a righteous way by which the punishment is averted. Let's take these truisms about forgiveness one at a time and apply them to ourselves.

1. Every man is a sinner and thus needs the forgiveness of God.
2. All forgiveness and willingness to forgive originates with God, so if we say we don't forgive ourselves we are really not willing to accept God's forgiveness.
3. No one deserves God's forgiveness; it is a free gift that cannot be merited.
4. Lack of forgiveness keeps us bound to sin and thus makes us fall under the judgment of God.
5. There is freedom from sin in forgiveness, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually.
6. Since God's desire is to forgive everyone who has offended Him in a much greater capacity than we have offended another person, we must forgive everyone also.

God wants to forgive everyone, ***Neh. 9:17, and they refused to listen, and did not remember Thy wondrous deeds which Thou hast performed among them; so they became stubborn and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But Thou art a God of forgiveness, gracious and compassionate, slow in anger and abounding in loving-kindness; and Thou didst not forsake them (Micah 7:18), Who is a God like Thee, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession (or inheritance)? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love, (or loving-kindness).*** Sometimes these OT Scriptures can be hard for us to relate to so let's look up these words in the Hebrew and enhance the meaning of Micah 7:18: *Who is an almighty, holy God like You Lord, who takes away guilt and forgives our sin and covers our transgressions, in the hope of restoring our relationship with You and forgiving those who remained faithful to You and repented, remaining in Your possession? You are reluctant to express the strength of Your anger continually towards us, because You only take pleasure in providing kindness, mercy, goodness, faithfulness, and love towards us, Your people.* In this verse God furnishes an occasion for praising the incomparable nature of the Lord. He now reveals His incomparable nature in grace and compassion for the sinners who, after falling away from Him by the worship of the golden calf, reveals Himself to Moses as a gracious and merciful God, who forgives guilt and sin. But this grace and compassion are only fully revealed by the coming of Jesus Christ. For our part He ***requires repentance*** and faith in the sinner who seeks His forgiveness, ***Ps. 32:5, I acknowledged my sin to Thee, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"; and Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin . Psalm 51:17, The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. Luke 7:36-50, Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him. And He entered the Pharisees house, and reclined at the table. And behold, there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisees house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet, and anointing them***

with the perfume. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him; that she is a sinner." And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher." "A certain money lender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denari, and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him more?" Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him "You have judged correctly." And turning towards the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair." You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. "You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. "For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little. And He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven." And those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves; "Who is this man who even forgives sins?" And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (Acts 3:19), repent, therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. (Acts 10:43), "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins." (1 John 1:9), If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Let's look at 1 John 1:9 more closely and realize for ourselves the assurance of forgiveness that we have in Jesus Christ for all of our sins. All of our sin completely and every one of our sins, there is not such condition as partial forgiveness from God. First of all lets read the translation in paraphrase from the Greek: *Whosoever shall concede and admit to his departing from what is morally right and the truth of a situation, not by his own standard of what is morally right, but by the standards of morality set forth by God, such as was taught on the Sermon on the Mount, God is faithful to His promises, dependable, and He always acts conformably to justice and acts according to what is right without any deficiency or failure to pardon us from our sin and consider the penalty paid by Him and He will purify us from the pollution and guilt of the totality of our wrongs and injustices.* IN ORDER FOR US TO WALK DAY BY DAY IN THE FELLOWSHIP WITH God and with our fellow believers, we must confess our sins, there is not forgiveness without confession, that is, without agreeing with God that we were sinful: sins of commission, sins of omission, sins of thought, sins of act, secret sins, and public sins. We must drag them out into the open before God, call them by their names, take sides with God against them, and forsake them. Yes, true confession involves forsaking of sins: **(Prov. 28:13), "He who covers his sins will not prosper: but whoever confesses his sins and forsakes them will have mercy"**. There is no mechanical way of gaining forgiveness, such as by offering a sacrifice or reciting a formula. The sinner is dependant entirely upon God's mercy, **(Psalm 51:1-4), Be gracious to me, according to Thy loving-kindness; according to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgression. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgression; and my sin is ever before me. For Against Thee, and Thee only, I have sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight; so that Thou art justified when Thou dost speak, and blameless when Thou dost judge. (Col. 2:13), And when you were dead in your transgressions and the un-circumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions.** Let's take a look at this verse in Col. 2:13 for a translation from the Greek: *Also, all of you, while you were living in opposition to "life" as defined in*

*the gospel, that is dead to Christ and His gospel and thus exposed to punishment, being spiritually dead, resting in your willful transgressions of the rules of God's morality of life that you had become aware of; and were guilty of and living outside of the promises of God through the corruption of our natural senses. He raised us from the death of our current sinful life to living with Christ, because He has shown us favor by pardoning our sinful lifestyle and every one of our errors, or faults of weakness by exercising His right to make us His child and He our legitimate Father.* Before our conversion we were all spiritually dead in our sins. This means, that because of our sins, we were spiritually dead toward God. There was nothing in our life that resembled a relationship with Him. It does not mean that our spirit was dead, but simply that there was no motion toward God and there was nothing we could do to win God's favor. We were in a position of distance from God and had given full rein to the lusts of our flesh. But when we heard the gospel and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we had been made alive with Christ and all of our sins had been forgiven. Our whole lifestyle had changed. Our history as sinners had come to an end and now we were new persons in fellowship with Christ.

When it comes to receiving anything in this life that is truly profitable for His kingdom, including receiving forgiveness, we are totally dependent on the mercy of God. This was so even in the sacrificial system of the OT. There was no thought of bribing God by offering sacrifices. On the contrary the sacrificial system was something God graciously gave to man as a means by which people might approach Him and obtain forgiveness for their sins; ***(Ps. 130:3, 4), If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared.*** Let's take closer look at these verses to get a better understanding of the Hebrew writer's intent: *If You, Lord, did continually and intensely regard and attach Yourself to the way we are twisting and perverting Your desires for us, O Lord, which one of us could take a "not guilty" stand? But with You there is no recording of our rights and wrongs towards Your desires for us, so that You may be revered, because such a reverence would consider us faithful and trustworthy which leads to belief in You which would cause us to act morally.* All of us, at one time or another has tried to bribe God. If the Lord kept an itemized account and made us pay for our sin as we went, then the situation for us would be absolutely hopeless. But we can be eternally grateful that there is a way in which sins can be forgiven. There is forgiveness for the guilty sinner and there is forgiveness for the sinning saint. It is obtained by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It covers the penalty of all sins—past, present, and future. It is possible because of the finished work of Jesus Christ at Calvary; in His death He paid the penalty for all our sins; not only everyone of our sins, but also everyone in its entirety, and God can freely forgive us because all His righteous claims have been met by our Savior who substituted Himself in our place to receive our punishment for our sin, which justified us before the Father. Forgiveness is obtained by confessing our sin to Him. The Father initiated a plan of forgiveness for us and now we must respond to that plan or invitation to partake in the plan. It results in the restoration of fellowship with God and with His family too, that is, His church. One result of His forgiveness is that He should be revered. When I think what it cost Him to forgive my sins, and when I realize that His forgiveness is full, free, and eternal, it causes me to reverence Him with trust, love and worship forever.

In the sacrifices, God provided a way whereby a person could demonstrate his repentance, faith and obedience. Without such attitudes, a person benefited nothing from his sacrifices, ***(Ps. 51:16-17), For Thou dost not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; Thou art not pleased with burnt offerings.***

***The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. (Is. 1:11), What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me? Says the Lord, I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of cattle. And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats, (Isa 1:16-20), Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil. Learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless; defend the orphan, plead for the widow. Come now let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are as scarlet, they will be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool. If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword. Truly the mouth of the Lord has spoken.***

In Psalm 51:16-17, a broken spirit is an attitude of valuing repentance to its utmost. Some of us who were raised in the old school religions think that we need to do penance in order to receive forgiveness, but penance only amounts to a works based attitude which indicates that we do not believe that what Christ did at Calvary was not enough to save us. We can see corresponding verses to these in Psalms in 1 Sam. 15:22; Prov. 21:3; Hos. 6:6; Matt. 9:13; Heb. 10:5, 6; Heb. 13:15, 16. Let's look at this verse in Isaiah with the words defined in English: *Wash yourselves, make yourself clean of sin by turning away from your morally bad thoughts and deeds that are in My view; stop doing what is morally corrupt. Remain teachable in the things that are pleasing to Me; seek out justice and righteousness, faithfulness and love. Follow the straight path in helping the widows and the orphans by being parents to the orphans and supporting the widows when they have a need. Change your behaviors now and let us reason together concerning our moral standing, says the Lord; even though your offenses are as easily seen as scarlet, they shall through My grace become pure white as freshly fallen snow; although they are emitting a color red like crimson, they shall through My mercy be as white as the finest wool. If you will willingly consent to My authority, you shall be blessed by the peace of consuming the items of excellent quality and desirability of this land. But, if you refuse to obey and rebel against My authority, you will be cursed by being consumed by the consuming fire of My judgment; for indeed the Lord truly has spoken these things.*

We must not think that, after reading some of the OT Scriptures that refer to animal sacrifices that our God is some kind of a sadistic God that gets pleasure out of seeing animals sacrificed. The teaching that we should glean from these verses is that God required a blood sacrifice to atone for our sin that is why it was necessary for Christ to shed His blood in the perfect sacrifice. The first admonition of verse 16 requires, primarily above all, purification from the sins committed, by means of forgiveness sought for and obtained. Wash! In the sense of washing one's self, clean yourselves. The difference between washing one's self and to clean one's self is very subtle. One is to be understood as referring to the one great act of repentance on the part of the person turning to God, the other is a daily repentance of one who has turned. We should keep ourselves clean by daily repentance. The second admonition requires them to place themselves in the light of the divine countenance, and put away the evil of their deeds, which are intolerable to pure eyes. Our sin can be compared figuratively to an intense burning of the eyes of God. ***Hab. 1:13, Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil, and Thou canst look on wickedness with favor.*** They were to wrestle against the wickedness to which their actual sin had grown, until at length it entirely disappeared. If they follow this line of divine reasoning, they will be cleansed from sins of deepest dye and enjoy the good things that God has provided for them. The gospel invitation is very significant: ***Come now and let us reason together, says the Lord, Though your sins be like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be white as wool.*** These words are a call to repentance and are significant when we consider that the name

“Isaiah” means “the salvation of Jehovah.” Divine reasoning, accepted by faith, teaches that there is cleansing from sin, that this cleansing is totally apart from human merit or effort, and that it is only through the redemption which the Lord Jesus accomplished by the shedding of His blood on the cross. Who can know the throngs who have answered the invitation of Isaiah 1:18? And it is still calling out to us today. The death of the animal in the place of the sinner also showed the sinner clearly that forgiveness of sin was possible only when the penalty of sin had justly been carried out. Forgiveness was costly. Without the shedding of blood there could be no forgiveness, (**Heb. 9:22**), **And according to the Law, one may almost say all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is not forgiveness.** Now let’s translate this verse from the Greek: *And according to the laws relating to external religious rites; (e.g. purification) one may nearly say, all of every kind of thing are cleansed in the ceremonial sense, that is, made pure, with the forcible taking away of life and offered up as an atonement with special emphasis laid upon it as the material basis of the individual life. The life of the animal offered for a favorable result appears in the blood separated from the flesh, and without the separating of blood there is only partial atonement and no release from our sins.* Almost everything under the law was purified with blood. But there were exceptions. For instance, when a man was to be numbered in a census among the children of Israel, he could bring a half-shekel of silver as “atonement money” instead of a blood offering. The coin was a token symbolizing atonement for the man’s soul in order for him to be reckoned as one of God’s people. Another exception is where certain forms of “ritual un-cleanliness” could be dealt with by an offering of fine flour. These exceptions dealt with atonement for, or covering of, sin, although generally speaking a blood offering was required even for atonement. But as far as justification of sin is concerned, there is no exception; blood must be shed. Christ’s death is the basis on which God forgives all sins, past present, or future, (**Matt. 26:28**), **for this is My blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. (Acts 13:38), Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. (Rom. 3:24-26), being justified as a gift by His grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ; whom God displayed publically as a propitiation (satisfactory expunger) in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Eph. 1:7), In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace. (Heb. 9:11-14), But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Heb. 9:26), Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.** Let’s unpack verse Heb 9:26 by looking at the Greek definitions of the words: *Because, it would have been necessary for Him to suffer and die many times from the beginning of creation of the world; but now at the consummation and the accomplishment of the purpose through the continuance of time He has shown Himself openly to be the*

*One to annul the commandment for the sacrifice of animals, because it was weak and unprofitable, for forgiveness of sin, thus Christ, Himself, could present Himself as a once-for-all sacrifice with permanent effect, knowing that we cannot accept the permanent sacrifice of Christ and also keep the recurring sacrifice of animals.* If Christ had made repeated offerings that would have meant repeated suffering; since His offering was His own life. It is unthinkable that He should have suffered the agonies of Calvary periodically since the foundation of the world! And unnecessary too! Under the New Covenant there is:

1. Positive finality—He has appeared once for all. The work never needs to be repeated.
2. A perfect timing—He appeared at the end of the ages, that is, after the Old Covenant had conclusively demonstrated man's failure and powerlessness.
3. A perfect work—He appeared to put away sin. The emphasis is on the words "put away". It was no longer a matter of annual atonement. Now it was eternal forgiveness.
4. A personal sacrifice—He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. In His own body He bore the punishment which our sins deserved. And once God has forgiven sins, they are removed forever (*Ps. 103:12; Isa. 43:25; Col. 2:13-14; Heb. 8:12; 10:17-18*).

Christ's followers have the *responsibility* to preach the forgiveness of sins, and because of this they become the means by which people hear the gospel and decide in their heart that they are forgiven, or reject it and remain in their sins, (*Acts 13:38, 39*), ***Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him (or this One) forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could be freed through the Law of Moses. (John 20:22-23), And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.*** Let's take this verse in John 20:22-23 apart and find the Greek meaning of these words: *In addition to giving them the instructions of the previous words, He blew the Holy Spirit in them, and said these words to them; "Partake of the Holy Spirit". If you pardon an offense toward God of anyone their offenses have been pardoned, if anyone of these offenses toward God that you do not pardon, they are not pardoned.* In order to understand this verse I need to go back to the preceding verse which says, ***"Jesus therefore said to them again, Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."*** Before the disciples could carry out the commission of verse John 20:21, however, they needed the power of the Holy Spirit. And Jesus gave them this power by breathing into them the Holy Spirit. The power to forgive or to retain sins is not for us to do in our own power, it is done through the conviction and the power of the Holy Spirit. God is the only One who has the power to forgive sin. When we forgive someone of a sin or an offense committed against us we are in reality responding to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, that is, we are responding to the influence of the Holy Spirit. But why did He "breathe" the Holy Spirit into them? The word for "spirit" in the Greek actually means "breathed" or to "give life to." This life, that we live, after our conversion, is actually the life that is influenced by the life or example of the Holy Spirit. This act reminds us of what God did to make the first man come alive—He breathed into him and he became a living soul. There is life in the breath of God. Man was created but did not come alive until God breathed into him the breath of life (*Gen. 2:7*). Jesus gave the disciples "the Spirit powered" and "Spirit guided mission" to preach the Good News about Him so that people's sins might be forgiven. The disciples did not have the power to forgive sins, but Jesus gave them the privilege of telling new believers that their sins had been forgiven because they have accepted Jesus' message. All

believers have this privilege. We can announce the forgiveness of sin with certainty when we ourselves repent and believe. Those who don't believe will not experience the forgiveness of sin, because they did not listen to the conviction of the Holy Spirit on their heart. Jesus on one occasion referred to the deliberate rejection of Him as the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, a sin for which there could be no forgiveness; **(Matt. 12:31-32), Therefore, I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or the age to come.** This verse would make it seem that not all people can be forgiven after all; but let's look at the translation from the Greek: *As to that (v. 30) I continually lay this before you, every kind of an offense toward God and any kind of evil speaking or slander spoken of men shall be pardoned, on the other hand continual wounding of the reputation by verbal abuse or evil speaking of the Holy Spirit shall not have any pardoned shown to man. Also whosoever, shall say a word to someone that lowers the status of Jesus as the Messiah, it shall be pardoned of him; on the other hand whosoever shall continually say anything that lowers the status of the Holy Spirit, it shall not be pardoned of him, neither in this time nor for eternity.* Jesus first wants to make sure that everyone understands that people will be forgiven for every sin including blasphemy if they repent. Too often people miss the promise and worry about the warning that follows. But the fact is those who believe in Jesus will be forgiven of all sins and blasphemies. When there is confession and repentance, no sin is beyond God's forgiveness. When the Bible says that there is one sin that cannot be forgiven—blasphemy against the Holy Spirit—it refers not so much to a single action as to an attitude. Those who defiantly deny Jesus' power and persistently refuse to believe that He is the Messiah are blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Jesus was not talking about rejecting Him, but rejecting the power behind Him. This indicates an irreversible hardness of the heart. Deliberate, ongoing rejection of the work of the Holy Spirit is blasphemy because it rejects God Himself and denies the conviction of the Holy Spirit to repent of sin. If you refuse to be convicted, you will not confess your sin, repent, nor ask for forgiveness, which is the key to understanding blasphemy. Refusal to believe demonstrates an impenetrable hardness of heart; thus forgiveness would not be possible because it would never be sought. Once people have been forgiven by God, they have the responsibility to forgive any who sin against them. This is more than a sign of their gratitude to God. It is a requirement laid upon them if they want to experience God's continued forgiveness of their own failures, **(Matt 6:12), And forgive us our debts, as we have also forgiven our debtors. (Matt. 18:21-35), Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him; Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a certain king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. "And when he had begun to settle them, there was brought to him one who owed him ten thousand talents. "But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. The slave therefore falling down, prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything.' "And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. " But the slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denari; and he seized him and began to choke him saying, 'Pay back what you owe.' "So his fellow slave fell down and began to entreat him, saying 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' "He was unwilling however, but went and threw him in prison until he**

***should pay back what was owed. "So his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. "Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me. "Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?" "And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed to him. "So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart. (Mark 11:25)," And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions. (Luke 6:37), And do not judge and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. (Luke 7:47), For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little. (Luke 17:4), And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times a day, saying "I repent", forgive him, (Eph. 4:32), And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.***

The key to understanding the verse in Luke is that it is not within the Christian's jurisdiction to judge the motives of persons that ask us for forgiveness. Let's unpack this verse in Eph. 4:32 by looking at the Greek intent of this verse: *Also we ought to be useful toward others, hence good-natured, gentle and kind to one another for their own good, full of compassion, being gracious to each other, just as God, for Christ's sake, also has been gracious toward you.* The preceding verse in Ephesians, (v-31) reminds us of the things that we must get rid of in our life. Which leaves a vacuum, left unfilled, will allow for the opportunity of an even greater immoral influence to enter into our heart. So Paul tells us that we should fill that empty space with Christ-like qualities. The former are natural vices, that is; with what we were born of or into. The Christ-like qualities are supernatural virtues; this verse in Ephesians tells us to fill that vacuum with these qualities:

1. Kindness—an unselfish concern for the welfare of others, and a desire to be helpful even at great personal sacrifice.
2. Tenderheartedness—A sympathetic, affectionate, and compassionate interest in others, and a willingness to bear their burden.
3. Forgiveness—A readiness to pardon offenses, to overlook personal wrongs against oneself, and to harbor no desire for retaliation.

Some of these things are hard for us to accept as necessary in our life and in our own power they are impossible to accept; that is why we need to call on the Holy Spirit for His power to create a change of heart in us. The greatest living example of how one should show forgiveness was in Jesus Christ Himself. The basis of His forgiveness is the work of Christ at Calvary. We are the unworthy objects, that is, not worthy of His forgiveness, but through His gift of grace we are made justified to be forgiven. We must remember that our responsibility to forgive others is not based on the other person's worthiness to be forgiven! We are not in a position to judge another person's worthiness. God could not forgive sin without proper satisfaction being made. Our relationship with Him could not have been restored to His satisfaction for salvation until we were declared righteous. In His love He provided the satisfaction which His righteousness demanded. In Christ, that is, in His Person and work, God found a righteous basis on which He could forgive us. Since He forgave us when we were in debt "millions of spiritual dollars", we ought to forgive others when they owe us "a few dollars." If we could compare,



somehow, what God sees in us, that is our offenses against Him, as sinners, and compare it to the degree that other person's have offended us it would be like comparing a million dollars to one dollar and He forgave us without hesitation. The moment a man wrongs me I must forgive him. Then my soul is free. If I hold the wrong against him I have sinned against God and against him and I jeopardize my forgiveness with God. Whether the man repents, makes amends, asks my pardon or not, makes no difference. I must instantly forgive him. He must face God with the wrong that he has done; but that is his affair and God's and not mine, except that I should help him according to Matt. 18:15. But whether this succeeds or not and before this even begins, I must forgive him.

Man became a slave of sin because of the fall of Adam, and thus in his fallen state is presented as a prisoner. **(Rom. 5:12), Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned. (Rom. 6:17, 18), But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed and having been freed from sin, you became slaves to righteousness. (Rom. 6:20), For when you were slaves to sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.** Let's look at this verse in Rom. 6:20 as translated from the Greek: *Because at the time when you were a servant of sin who indulged in or was addicted to the proneness of offending God by not keeping within His standard of morality, you were free as far as moral perfection.* When we are slaves to sin, the only freedom we know is the freedom from righteousness, or freedom from what God desires us to be. It was a desperate condition to be in—bound by moral corruption and free from anything that was good in God's eyes! In **(Luke 4:18), The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release of the captives, and recovery of the sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden;** the Lord Jesus declared His ministry on earth, this is quoted from **(Isa. 61:1), the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and freedom to the prisoners;** man is presented as a prisoner of war, a captive. His captivity is due to the sin of Adam and to his own sin in that he continues in sinfulness. It is interesting indeed that in the passage of Luke, the word (forgiveness) is used without any designation of what this deliverance is from. **The Lord said: "He has anointed Me... to claim release to the captives"...to set at liberty, in freedom."** The work of Christ therefore, is designated as deliverance from everything that holds man a prisoner away from God. However, setting sinful man free would have been a very dangerous thing if God did not simultaneously change man's nature, **(2 Cor. 5:17), Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature, the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (2 Pet. 1:4), For by these he has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises; in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.** Let's look at the verse in 2 Cor., which is a very popular verse in the Christian's growth into a mature Christian: *Consequently, whosoever is of oneness of mind, heart, and purpose of Christ and has an intimate union, with Him by faith and has become as branches of the true vine, he is a different and better man created and changed from evil to good by the Spirit of God; the things of sinfulness have perished; and observe, everything that begins to be a part of us is as changed from evil to good by the Spirit of God.* Before our conversion, one might have judged others according to human standards. But now all of that is changed. Old methods of judging have passed away and behold all things are new. Sometimes when this verse is

quoted it gives quite a false impression. Listeners are apt to think that when a man is saved his old habits, evil thoughts, and lustful looks are gone forever, done away with, and everything becomes literally new in a person's life. We know through our own experience that this is not true. The verse does not describe a believer's practice, but rather his position. Notice that it says that if anyone is in Christ. The words "in Christ" are key to this passage. In Christ old things have passed away and all things become new. Unfortunately, "in me" not all of this is true yet! But as I progress in the Christian walk, I desire that my practice may increasingly correspond to my position. One day, when the Lord Jesus returns, the two will be in perfect agreement. Man's freedom is not one that permits him to continue in sin, (**1 John 3:6**), **No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him**, but binds him to Christ. What Christ does is not simply to take man from prison and set him free, but also to change him radically, giving him power over sin.

Forgiveness involves the new birth of man spiritually or in his inner self, the "natural man" sees no need for forgiveness, John 3:3-12; ***Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born can he?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you unless one is born of water and Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh, is flesh, and that which is born of Spirit is spirit. Do you marvel that I said to you? 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things?" "Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and you do not receive our witness. If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things?*** Let's unpack these verses from English to Greek to English and see if we can gain a better insight into what Jesus is telling us in these verses: *Jesus, (which in this case the name has the designation of God's help), took this occasion to discreetly return an answer to Nicodemus that would address what He had previously said. I am about to tell you an infallible truth, so pay close attention for I am going to lay this truth before you, there are no exceptions to the fact that you must be born of God in a spiritual sense, that is to have received a new life from God, unless you do you cannot enjoy the privileges of God's dominion. Nicodemus replied to that statement in this way, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" Jesus discreetly returned this answer, concerning the previous topic, to him, Pay close attention to what I am about to say for I am about to tell you an infallible truth, except that you receive a new life from God, one cleansed from the corruption of sin, and filled with the enlivening, refreshing, and comforting influences of the Holy Spirit you cannot come into the joy of the Lord. That which has its source out of the human nature is of the human nature; and that which has its source from the new spiritual life is imparted to those who believe in the gospel, this is of the Holy Spirit. Do not be bewildered that I have said to you; 'you have to be born of God or the Spirit, in a spiritual sense, to receive a new life from God. You can compare what I've said to this; the wind blows upon whatever it wills and you generally hear the sound of it, although you do not where it comes from or where it is going; so are all who are born of God or of the Spirit, in a spiritual sense, to have received from God a new spiritual life. Nicodemus responded to*

what Jesus Christ has said to him by saying this, "How can these things be?" Jesus took this occasion to answer him discreetly, Are you a master and teacher of the Scriptures to the descendants of Jacob, it's all in the Scriptures as prophesy and yet you do not understand or comprehend the things that I have told you?" Listen! For I am about to tell you an infallible truth, I am relating what I know as the truth to you, we talk a lot about that which we are acquainted with, and we testify to the things that we have seen; and yet you do not embrace a doctrine of Jesus Christ as being who He says He is and believing in what He declares as the truth with the authority of a witness, as of One who knows. If, hypothetically, I would tell you of things about men of the earth and you do not trust in and rely on that, how can I tell you to trust in and rely on things that pertain to heaven, since only one person can speak about heavenly things, that is, the Christ, because only one person on earth has been in heaven?" Our Lord starts out by saying, "Nicodemus, you have come to Me for teaching, but what you really need is to be born again. That is where you must begin. You must be born from above. Otherwise, you can never see the kingdom of God. The Lord introduces these statements to us with words to alert us that what He is about to say is the truth and we must pay attention to them. Just as the first birth is necessary for physical life, so a second birth is necessary for divine life. In other words, Christ's kingdom can only be entered by those whose lives have been changed. Since His reign will be a righteous one, His subjects must also be righteous. He cannot reign over people who were going on in rebellion to Him. In a further explanation Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born of water and Spirit. What did Jesus mean by this? Water represents the "cleansing" of repentance, confession, and forgiveness. All of this comes about and none of this can come about without the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Without these elements there cannot be a spiritual cleansing of our sin and a change in our character, attitudes and values. This spiritual birth is produced by the Holy Spirit of God when a person believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus tells us "that which is born of flesh is flesh" He means that children born of human parents are born in sin and are hopeless and helpless as far as saving themselves is concerned. On the other hand, "that which is born of Spirit is spirit". A spiritual birth takes place when a person trusts in the Lord Jesus. When a person is born again through the Spirit, he receives a new nature, and is made fit for the kingdom of God. This new birth is very much like the wind. First of all, it takes place according to the will of God. It is not a power which man holds in his control. Secondly this new birth is invisible. You cannot see it taking place, but you can see the results of it in a person's life. When a man has been saved a change comes over him. The evil things that he formerly loved, he now hates. The things of God that he formerly despised, he now loves. Just as no one can fully understand the wind, so the new birth is miraculously a work of the Spirit of God which man is not able to comprehend fully. Moreover the new birth, like the wind, is unpredictable. It is not possible to state just when and where it will take place. Man's spirit, therefore, is transformed through faith in Jesus Christ, **(Rom. 5:1); Therefore having been justified by faith we (or let us) have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.** This verse translated from the Greek: *Since therefore we have the justification bestowed by God upon men, through Christ, through the instrumentality of access to the gospel, we have peace of mind and tranquility, arising out of reconciliation with God and a sense of divine favor through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Man with a new spirit within him is given the ability to have power over sin, having been delivered from the guilt of sin: **(Rom. 6:17, 18); "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves to sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves to righteousness."**

Forgiveness is part of a larger process which does not involve simply the freedom of the sinner, but the change of the sinner from being a slave of sin to becoming a slave of God. With that freedom from sin, he acquires freedom of action because of his changed nature and spirit. He acquires the ability to follow after God instead of fleeing from God, the desire to flee from sin and the pursuit of it. Forgiveness therefore, must never be understood as the permission for the sinner to continue in his sinful condition. We can't say to ourselves "Well now that I'm forgiven I can continue my life as status quo as a sinner", this is not a repentant attitude.

In the same manner, we must not misunderstand what it is to forgive on the part of the Christian in regard to another, as meaning the forgiving Christian is supposed to allow the sinner to continue in his sinful condition. Forgiveness is not condoning sin but rather doing everything possible to see that the particular sin or sins of the sinner are removed from him by God who is the only One who can deliver and cleanse him. Forgiveness, therefore, is never freedom *in* sin but freedom *from* sin by God.

Heb. 9:22 contains an absolute statement, ***"without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."*** As animal sacrifices gave OT sinners relief from guilt of sin, so Jesus Christ's shed blood (His sacrificial death) gives believers not only freedom from the guilt of sin, which in the NT is called "justification," ***(Rom. 4:25); He who was delivered up because of our transgressions and was raised because of our justification. (Rom. 5:18); So then, as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men;*** but also "cleansing" or "purification." The word for "justification", according to the complete word dictionary, means *the act which declares a right or just person as such.* The resurrection of Jesus Christ must not be thought of simply as evidence of His death. What needs to be stressed here is that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is necessary to justification, not merely because of the difference it makes to us as certifying the atoning efficacy of His death and thus evoking our faith in Him, but also because of the difference it makes for Christ Himself. It marks the point at which His sovereign power as Lord is made effective. Our justification, the basis of which has been laid in the death, becomes an accomplished fact and effective reality only through Christ's rising again. By faith we are united to a living Christ whose death was essential for our redemption. That which redeems is not Christ's atoning death apart from His living person into whose union we are brought by faith. We cannot separate the propitiatory work of Christ from Christ Himself. We are saved, not by believing the fact that Christ died for our sins, but by union with the crucified and risen, exalted Savior. Only through union with a living Savior who has in Him the virtue of His atoning death do justification, forgiveness, and all the blessings of redemption become ours: ***(Eph. 1:7) In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of trespasses, according to the richness of His grace.***

***(Heb. 1:3); And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. (2 Pet. 1:9), For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short sided, having forgotten his purification from his former sins (for the qualities referred to in this verse see 2 Pet.1:2-8).*** Let's translate 2 Pet. 1:9 to shed more light on it: *Truly he who does not have these things is slow of understanding or cannot see clearly, and has become oblivious to the truth that he was cleansed by grace of his old self through the purification accomplished in man by Christ Jesus.* There are various

degrees of impaired vision which are spoken of as blindness. Shortsightedness here specifies the form of blindness in which man lives for the present rather than for the future. He is so occupied with material things that he neglects the spiritual. Whoever lacks the seven characteristics listed in verses 5-7, moral excellence, knowledge, self control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, is blind. He is not aware of what is central in life. He lacks discernment of true spiritual values. He lives in a dark world of shadows. Finally, the man who lacks these seven virtues has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. The truth of his redemption has lost its grip on him. He is going back in the direction from which he was once rescued. He is toying with sins that were a part of his former life. This is why in Rom. 3:25, in speaking of the OT sacrifices, Paul calls the result "pardon," which has been misinterpreted as "remission" as if it were the same as "forgiveness." If Paul meant it to be "forgiveness", the permanent remission of sins without the need of further sacrifices, he would have called it that. The blood of Christ provided the removal of the guilt of sin as well as the cleansing from sin on a permanent basis. "Pardon," which occurs only in Rom 3:25, must be translated as the "by-passing" of sin and not the remission of sin, for where there is forgiveness of sins there is no more offering for sin, as we read earlier in Heb. 10:18.

In this study we have stated two true facts that if left unexplained may cause some confusion. Fact #1 God is willing to forgive any and all sin or sins, as we read in Mark 3:28. Fact #2 Blasphemy is an unforgiveable sin (Mark 3:28, 29). This important saying of our Lord that is referring to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit occurs also in ***Mt. 12:31, 32; Therefore any sin of blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age, or in the age to come.*** And in ***Luke 12:10; And everyone who will speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him.*** Let's break this verse down from the literal English to try to understand the content better: *Also, whosoever shall be in My presence and declare a negative verbal expression toward Jesus as the Messiah, it shall be pardoned when he asks for pardon; but he who hurts the reputation of the Holy Spirit with either words or reports, such as slander, and will not confess his desire for pardon, shall not be pardoned.* Un-forgiveness speaks of God's unwillingness and ability to forgive anyone of any sin and of all their sins put together if the dynamics to receive forgiveness are not present; i.e., an unrepentant heart. We should note that these words of the Lord were spoken immediately after the accusation was made against Him that the works He was doing were done by the power of Beelzebul, the chief of the demons, when in reality the miracles were performed through the power of the Holy Spirit. So they were saying that the Holy Spirit was the devil, a slanderous accusation toward the Holy Spirit indeed! (***Matt. 12:22-30; Then there was brought to Him a demon-possessed man who was blind and dumb, and He healed him, so that the dumb man spoke and saw. And all of the multitudes were amazed and began to say, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons." And knowing their thoughts He said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city (or every city) or house divided against itself shall not stand. "And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?" "And if I, by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? Consequently they shall be your judges. "But if***

***I cast out demons by the Spirit of God then the kingdom of God has come upon you. "Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters." (Mk. 3:20-27); And He came home, and the multitude gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. And when His own people (or kindred) heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, "He has lost His senses." And the Scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying "He is possessed by Beelzebul, and He casts out demons by the ruler of demons." And again He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan?" "And if a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. "And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. "And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished! But no one can enter the strong man's house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then plunders the house."***

Let's unpack Mark 3:20-27 to see if we can be a little more enlightened to what The Lord is telling us through Mark: *And Jesus came home, (or into a house), and the confused crowd assemble again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. And when His relatives were informed of this, they proceeded to forcibly seize Him; for they uttered these words, "He has lost His mind." And those clothed with the special authority of the Sanhedrin who came down from Jerusalem were speaking these words to the crowd "He is in continued possession of "the lord of the flies," and He expels demons from people by the leader of the demons. And Jesus the Christ bade them to come toward Him and He began to say these things to them in a similitude, that is, in a short story that resembled a point He wanted to make, "How can the adversary of the people expel an adversary from people?" And if a dominion is disunited by discord against its self, as a person who continually argues a point with himself would be; that dominion cannot be established. And so if the "lord of flies" continually assaults himself and is disunited by hostility toward himself; he cannot be established, but he himself destroys himself. There is not even one person that can come to the point of overpowering a powerful person's actual dwelling place and seize his household goods unless he first of all binds the powerful person's hands and feet, depriving him of all liberty to defend himself, and then he can seize his household goods.* Jesus returned from the mountain where He had called His disciples to a Galilean home. Such a multitude had gathered around Him and His disciples that He and His apostles were kept too busy to even eat. Hearing of His activities, His own people, that is His close friends and relatives, felt that He was beginning to lose His mind, and they sought to take Him away, out of public view. They were doubtlessly embarrassed by His zeal of God and His apostles. It is always true that a man who is on fire for God seems deranged to his contemporaries. The more like Christ we become, the more we too will be persecuted and experience the sorrow of being misunderstood by our relatives and friends. If we set out to make a fortune, men will cheer us on and support our vision. If we are a fanatic for Jesus Christ, they will abandon us and spread false rumors about our intentions. The scribes that were in the crowd surrounding Jesus and His apostles accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of the ruler of the demons. The name of Beelzebul means "the lord of dung flies" or the "lord of filth." This was a serious, vile, and blasphemous charge. At first Jesus refutes it then He pronounced doom on the persons who made it. If He were casting out demons by Beelzebul, then Satan would be working against himself, frustrating his own efforts. His aim is to control men through demons, not to free them from demons. A kingdom or any kind of leadership that is divided cannot endure. Continued survival depends on internal unity, not

antagonism. The scribe's accusations were therefore preposterous. I doubt if these highly educated men even believed it themselves. The ultimate goal of the scribes, in my opinion, was to defame Christ, and cause a riot, which would eventually lead to, at the very least, a discrediting of Christ and His work. In fact, the Lord Jesus was doing the very opposite of what they accused Him. His miracles signified the downfall of Satan rather than his prowess. That is what the Savior meant when He said, "No one can enter a strong man's house, and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house. The point of the parable is this; no one can cast out demons from a person, without first having power over the chief demon. In Luke 12:10 the Lord's saying about the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is separated from the context of the discussion concerning Jesus and Beelzebul which is given in Matt. 12:22-30. The words of Christ become far more understandable if we look at what occasioned them. What the Lord wanted to teach after this discussion regarding the activity of the devil among men was this: The devil is really not the counter-type of the Lord Jesus in the plan of man's salvation, but he is the counter-type of the Holy Spirit whose function is to convict unto repentance or reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. **(John 16:8-15); "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall take care of Mine, and shall disclose it to you. All the things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said, that He takes care of Mine and will disclose it to you".** Let's look at this verse from the Greek interpretation because there are some words in this verse that we may not be sure of the meaning: *So when, He, the Holy Spirit comes to you, He will convince the present world of its' errors, and refute the present world that is transient, worthless, and evil, both physically and morally, and has departed from what is true, right, and correct; and the Holy Spirit will convince you that the world is the seat of temptations and irregular desires and immorality ; and also that it is a place in which the Holy Spirit has a special office or ministry in regard to the world, distinct from that which He exercises towards believers. He will also convince the world of what is righteous, that is knowing the highest and the most perfect sense of one of God's attributes of His character and His perfect ability to discriminate between good and evil, and always choosing the good. He will convince you In respect to the world's departure from what is true, right and correct, for He has this reason and motive to do so; the world does not trust in and rely on Me as their Savior; and they do not respect the highest and most perfect sense of God's attributes of His character and His perfect ability to separate men, the good from the evil. He has this reason and motive to convince men's hearts; because I withdraw Myself to the Father, and you will not have Me to look at with interest and purpose; and for this reason and motive He will start the process of an actual separation of men, the good from the evil, the evil to join with the ruler of this world who rules in the hearts of worldly and wicked men; the good having been separated to go to the Father. I have many more issues to lay down before you, but you cannot take them up right now. But, when He, the Holy Spirit of the divine truth or faith and practice of the true gospel, that is derived from the One true God comes to you, He will teach you about all of the divine truth that is derived from the One true God; because He will not speak of His own thoughts, but whatever He learns from the Father He will teach; and He will tell you what is to come.*

*He shall present My conspicuous and glorious divine character and attributes; because He shall care for Mine, and shall present Me that way to you. Everything that the Father has possession of is Mine also; so that is why I said that He takes care of Mine, and will foretell you of things to come.* The Holy Spirit creates an inward awareness of sin, righteousness and judgment in the life of the individual sinner. The Holy Spirit condemns the “world” just by the very fact that He is here. He should not be here if there was no sin, un-righteousness, or need for judgment in the world. The Spirit convicts the world of the sin and of failing to believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior. He is worthy of belief. There is nothing about Him that makes it impossible for men to believe in Him, that is, to trust in Him, rely on Him and have faith in Him. But those who chase after the world’s lusts, that is, the things that are pleasing to our senses and hence make their flesh their god, have refused. Jesus claimed to be righteous, but the world said He had a demon. The Father had the last word; He said in effect that, “My Son is righteous,” and I will prove it by raising Him from the dead and taking Him back to heaven. The Spirit also convicts the world of coming judgment. The fact that He is here means that the devil has already been condemned at the cross and that all who refuse to believe in the Savior will share in his judgment also. The devil counter acts this conviction. The word that is translated from the Greek as “convict” in John 16:8 means **“to bring under conviction.”** The Holy Spirit here is presented as the one who brings judgment upon the devil. The two counter acting each other. The first statement that is made by Christ is that each sin, all sins together and blasphemy shall be forgiven. Mark 3:28, instead of saying every sin and blasphemy, He says “all sins.” **The word “blasphemies” means to say something which hurts a person.** “Sin” is the inclusive name of all kinds of sins, missing the mark of any kind which God has set for man’s goal. What is stated in these first words is that God is both ready and able to forgive anything. In order to comprehend this, we must first understand the meaning of the word “forgiven”. It means to **send away, to remove the sin or sins from the sinner, so that he is free from it in order that the sin can never be found and charged against him before the judgment seat of God.** It is not overlooking the sin, but removing the sin from the sinner. Secondly, we observe that the word means that “any and all” sins will be removed by God. God must be understood as the agent who removes the sin from the sinner. This is particularly the function of Jesus Christ who took upon Himself man’s sin. We must remember, however, that no personality of the triune God acts independently, but always in complete and united agreement and cooperation with the other personalities of the Trinity. Thus the agent of “shall be forgiven” must be understood as God in general and Christ in particular. Thirdly, “shall be forgiven” means that it will be taken away each time that it is necessary to do so, and it will be done repetitively. It indicates the forgiveness which man experiences from God is available whenever man asks for it in true repentance.

In Mark 3:28 we have the words “all the sins.” The word for “sins” in the Greek indicates the result of an action. In this instance “sins” indicates sins as individual acts or the bad reputation resulting from them. The comprehensiveness of the forgiveness which God can give to the sinner is made very clear here. Not only all sin or sinfulness in itself, but also the individual acts of sin, as well as their ill repute brought upon the sinner, are removed. The forgiveness, however, we know from the Scriptures is not automatic, but depends on our true repentance. Every sin is forgiven by God consequent to man’s repentance, and man’s repentance is consequent to the activity of the Holy Spirit in a man’s life. If man resists that activity of the Holy Spirit, he will be un-convicted of his sin whether it is his sinfulness in general or his



sin in particular and its ill repute; if man is un-convicted by the Holy Spirit he will not repent. Consequently, God will not remove that sin or its effects.

Mark adds something which the other two Gospel writers do not in this first statement about God's readiness and ability to forgive all sin and blasphemy: "whatever blasphemes they utter." More literally this should be translated: "and blasphemies," (the reports that men will give which will hurt God's reputation among men) whatever these blasphemies may be if they shall blaspheme." The verb "blaspheme" or "will blaspheme" means at one time and not continuously as a perpetual and uninterrupted mode of life. The verse here is declaring that no matter how careful we are, we can never live in such a perfect way as to always cause others to believe all that they should about our God whom we represent among them. Our actions portray a different God than what our mouths proclaim. Many times we give the wrong impression to others about our Lord whom we profess to follow. These wrong reputations of God, "blasphemies," will be forgiven. We who love Him will allow His Holy Spirit to convict us of our shortcomings in adequately representing God among others. As a result of that conviction, there is the removal of harm which we have done to the testimony of God.

For a better understanding of what these blasphemies are which are generally spoken of by Mark we can go back to Matt. 12:32. Jesus said, ***"And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him."*** "The Son of Man" here is Jesus Christ. In order for a sinner to appropriate Christ he must repent of his sin. (***Rom. 10:9***); ***If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. (John 1:12)***; ***But, as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.*** Let's unpack John 1:12 from the Greek: *However, to all that did embrace Him and His instructions, He gave of His own accord and good will the authority to receive the new character of one who possesses the character of God, even to those who trust in and rely on His attributes, relations and manifestations.* This verse tells us how we can become children of God. It is not by good works, not by church membership, not by doing one's best, not by making sacrifices—but by receiving Him and by believing in His name. But, in order that we may be convicted of our sin, it is necessary for us to allow the Holy Spirit to work in us. In other words, any sin that we confess to the Lord Jesus Christ He will forgive, being able and ready to remove it from us. But, if an individual has not been convicted of sin, how can he confess Christ? And this is what makes the next statement of our Lord in Matt. 12:32 understandable: ***But whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him."*** In Mark 3:29 ***it says, "But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him."*** In the vocabulary of the Greek "SPEAK AGAINST" translates to this: "to say at one particular time with full understanding of what one says." In Luke 12:10 it translates to "the one having blasphemed in the past at one particular time or repetitively." It is used as a supposition, meaning that if at any time in the past he did blaspheme. Both words "say" and "having blasphemed" are indicative of the fact that this saying or blasphemy is a one-time blasphemy either once or on different occasions and not a continuous life of blasphemy, i.e., constantly attacking the person and the work of the Holy Spirit and His reputation among men. This refers first to the resistance against the Holy Spirit for His conviction unto salvation, the initial repentance of man. The declaration is that no one who resists the convicting power of the Holy Spirit can be saved. The secondary meaning is that no one, not even the believer, will be able to escape the consequence of his willful sin if he does not allow the Holy Spirit to convict him of these

specific sins, or sinfulness in general, which has hurt God's reputation among men, (**Heb. 10:26, 27**); ***For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of fire which will consume the adversaries.*** These verses translated from the original Greek: *Because if we are in a mindset that we intentionally continue to do wrong after we have laid hold of the knowledge that very powerfully influences our form of religious life, a knowledge that requires laying claim to personal involvement of the divine truth of the faith and practice of the true gospel, there no longer remains an atonement for the things we have done wrong, but a great and important dreadful expectation of a specific sentence of punishment and condemnation pronounced, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.* This verse is concerned with deliberately sinning after receiving the knowledge of the truth. Like Judas, the person has heard the gospel. He knows the way of salvation; he has even pretended to receive it; but then he deliberately repudiates it. For such a person there no longer remains a sacrifice that can be efficacious enough to atone for his sins. He has decisively and conclusively rejected the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. Therefore God has no other way of salvation to offer him.

As to the relationship of the sin of blasphemy to the Holy Spirit in Matt. 12:32, this is what it says ***"But whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit."*** In Mark 3:29 it says, ***"But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit."*** In the true translation of the Greek it does not say the word "against" but "unto", which means "unto or in the face of." A person with this attitude would say "in your face Holy Spirit; I'm not going to stop this sin which I love more than Christ Himself." In Luke 12:10 it is the same. With the word "against" we may understand that the blasphemy is spoken against the Holy Spirit to other persons, but with the correct translation we may understand that the blasphemy is hurled directly in the face of the Holy Spirit. It is as if man is defying the Holy Spirit and saying, "there is nothing you can do to divert me from my present sinful course. I am going to have my own way regardless of the shame brought upon the name of Christ." Blasphemers don't talk *about* the Holy Spirit as much as they talk *to* the Holy Spirit. The remarks of all three Gospel writers differs in the last statement concerning the impossibility of forgiveness here and in the hereafter in the absence of man's acknowledgement of his sin, and the consequent convicting of the Holy Spirit. Matt. 12:32 says, ***"It shall not be forgiven him, either in this age, or in the age to come."*** The sentence structure of the Greek as it is written means that it shall not be forgiven by God and in particular by Jesus Christ, at any specific time in a future existence. Matthew says, ***"Shall not be forgiven him,"*** meaning, "will not be removed from him." Put in a definite statement, it means it will be counted against him, either hindering him from entrance into heaven if he only had false repentance. Just saying the words or reciting a mechanical prayer will not bring forgiveness. Mark 3:29 says ***"never has forgiveness."*** A more literal translation from the Greek text is, "does not have remission unto the eternity." Luke simply says, ***"shall not be forgiven"***. Matthew, however, is the most explicit in saying, ***"either in this age, or in the age to come."*** This is proof that the fate of man as it is determined in this age cannot be altered in the next age. The time for course correction is in this life. If one does not submit to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit and repent, in the future, or after his death, God is not going to grant that person exemption from the consequences of his failure to repent during his earthly life. The bed that one makes in his life will be the one he must lie in for eternity.

Only Mark 3:29 has the concluding phrase, ***“But is guilty of eternal sin.”*** The Greek translation says, “But guilty is he of eternal punishment.” “Guilty” in the Greek means “to be held fast, bound, or obliged.” Therefore, it means guilty and deserving of the punishment to which he is subject, as also in ***Matt. 26:66; what do you think? They answered and said, “He is deserving of death!” (Mark 14:64) “You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?” And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.*** Let’s define this verse in Mark 14:64: *You have heard His slanderous statements against God; how did it seem to your mental eye? And they, each one, adjudged Him to be guilty and pronounced Him being liable to the sentence of death.* He is guilty right now, not will be guilty. This guilt is always upon the man who does not recognize the Holy Spirit’s conviction. There is no chance of repenting in the hereafter. If he would recognize it and seek forgiveness here, then he would not be liable at the eternal judgment.

There is, of course, the question of the sins we commit willfully on this earth, for which if we repent and desist, there is forgiveness, but what about the irreversible consequences of our sins, such as murder? For those sins there is the doctrine of counteracting mercifulness, all of our sins deserve punishment but God’s mercy counteracts our deserved punishment, ***Matt. 5:7; Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. (James 2:13); For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.*** Let’s look at James 2:13 closer: *Also, in the day of judging a believers works he will be given a judgment that is merciful proportionately to the mercy he has given; mercy passes over a deserved punishment.* Verse 13 must be understood in light of its context. James is speaking to believers. There is no question of eternal punishment here; that penalty was paid once for all at the cross of Calvary. Here it is a question of God’s dealing with us in this world as children. If we do not show mercy to others, we are not walking in fellowship with God and can expect to suffer the consequences. Showing mercy to others is a fruit of being a disciple of Christ, it is a visible part of our changed heart or a born again Christian. The end of Verse 13 says something that should be interesting to us; ***“mercy triumphs over judgment.”*** It would seem by this statement that God would rather show us mercy than to judge us. ***(Micah, 7:18, 19); Who is a God like Thee, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious acts of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in His unchanging love. He will again have compassion on us.*** We can rejoice in the face of judgment if we have shown mercy to others, but if we have not shown mercy to those whom we might justly condemn, we will not be shown mercy. Someone, for example, betrays our trust; in our mind we could justify being angry with them, but a true disciple of Christ will choose instead to sow the mercy. Let us remember that the way we treat the least lovable believer is the way we treat the Savior, ***Matt. 25:40; “Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.”*** How can we justify not showing mercy to another after all of the mercy, which is in a much greater degree, been shown to us by Jesus Christ.

Eternal judgment is based upon the judgment of sin on this earth. In eternity God is going to respect our will which we have exercised in the here and now. If we chose to defy God here and the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, then God is going to deny us in eternity and let us reap the results of the choice we have made. The last phrase of Mark 3:29 is ***“eternal judgment or condemnation.”*** It refers to the ultimate judgment of God which means separating or sifting the good from the evil (Matt. 13:41-

43; 49-50), but it also includes the punishment for the evil and it also refers to our un-confessed and unredeemed sin on earth.

The conclusion we must draw from this teaching is this: If we are professing to be Christians, that is, if we have entitled ourselves as “followers of Christ,” we must know what we are saying about ourselves when we publically or privately profess to being Christian, and what we are saying about our reputation and the reputation of Christ. To be a follower of Christ we must adhere to a strict code of ethics and/or morals. Not in the same way as the Pharisees and Sadducees kept a strict code of conduct or the law, but we keep this code of conduct because we are a changed person, with a regenerate heart that shows in our conduct that is Christ-like. These moral ethics can be found most obviously in the study of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). Here Jesus gives us His moral code that He expects His followers to follow as a code for living or as a result of being born again. It is good for me to read these chapters as a kind of spiritual maintenance, much like I would do a periodic maintenance or oil change on my car. This is the morality that He maintained, as a human being, that we are capable of following and must follow if we truly are His followers. How can we profess to be “followers” if we don’t allow Him to lead? These verses are what we are saying about our reputation when we call ourselves “Christian.” If we call ourselves “Christian” and are espousing these principles as our way of life as a Christian, but if according to our conduct we don’t live up to “the code,” we are damaging the reputation of Christ and committing blasphemy. We are more than hypocrites; we are also condemned until we confess our sin, repent of our sin, and are forgiven through the conviction of the Holy Spirit. We are condemned because we have never really been born again.

On the positive side we have, as believers and followers, the freedom of forgiveness. The heavy burden of holding something against another seems at times to weigh us down to a point where it can be all consuming in our thoughts and words which lead to INAPPROPRIATE actions. It makes us angry at times when we should be joyful or at the very least content. The thought of our own vengeance seems to grow greater at each passing day until it is out of proportion to what has occurred at the time of the incident. Our character changes from one of benevolence to one of extreme self-centeredness and self-righteousness. Forgiveness will give us freedom from this spiraling downward trend and put joy back in our hearts. But why; why is there this tremendous freedom in forgiveness? If someone were to ask me “which one of God’s attributes do I think is the greatest?” I would reply that His love is the foundation of all of His attributes, which can be seen plainly in the Scriptures, **1 Cor. 13:13; Mark 12:30, 31; etc.** And then it would be reasonable to conclude that His mercy and grace that are expressed in His forgiveness would be the greatest of, what I refer to as, His secondary line attributes, that is, everything else that comes after love. We can conclude these two facts from the very reason of the provision of His incarnation. One, He became man because He loved man, and two, as a result of this love, man needed His mercy and grace as is expressed in His forgiveness of sin in order for man to have fellowship with Him. There are two basic reasons I believe we can appropriate this freedom that forgiveness brings us; one, to not forgive is to put ourselves in the position of a judge. If we take this position we have taken a position that is not Scriptural and by doing so we have put ourselves in a position to deny ourselves the blessings of God (**Matt 6: 14, 15**); ***For, if you forgive men of their transgressions your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.*** Second, forgiveness is the essence of the purpose of Christ becoming man. In a sinful

state man is not in a position that allows him to fellowship with God. Thus by living a life that is central to the life of Christ He has lifted our burdens, including burdens caused by un-forgiveness, from us; ***(Matt. 11:28-30); Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble of heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My load is light.*** The Word of God tells us in several passages that we are to imitate Him, ***(1Cor. 11:1); Be imitators of me, just as I am of Christ, (1 Thess. 1:6); You also became imitators of us and the Lord; (1 Thess. 2:14); For you brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus.*** We can imitate Him by loving the Father and loving each other and through this love forgiving one another. I can think of no better way to imitate Him than to allow the Holy Spirit to convict us and we agree with Him to have a forgiving spirit. The outfall of our forgiveness will be a freedom that no one will be able to take away from us and it will give us a peace unlike we have ever known; ***(Phi. 4:7); And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***

Anyone who truly is a Christian knows, through their own experience and from His Word, that if we seek God He will reveal Himself to us, ***Deut. 4:29; But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all of your heart and all your soul. 1 Chr. 28:9; As for you my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with your whole heart and a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him. 2 Chr. 15:2; The Lord is with you when you are with Him. And if you seek Him He will let you find Him. Ezra 8:22; The hand of our God is favorably disposed on those who seek Him. Ps. 119:2; How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart. Pr. 28:5; Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand all things. Isa. 55:6; Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Jer. 29:13; And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all of your heart. Matt. 7:7; Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. Heb. 11:6; And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.*** When God does reveal Himself to us He does so in a way that seems impactful and life changing. If we have sought Him and it seems that He is not revealing Himself to us we must remember that “seeking” Him does not mean that we merely give Him a few seconds out of our day. We must do so with our *whole heart, mind and soul.* This means that we make seeking Him our whole life’s passion and daily work. When I talked about this person that I was in a relationship with that prompted my supplication for mercy, it was at a time in my life when I was at a point of emotional and spiritual desperation. I ignorantly had made this person my lord and my lord was abandoning me. But my true Lord made it known to me that He was not abandoning me. Even though it was many years ago that this took place it still arouses my emotions when I think of how the Lord responded to my pleas for mercy. But He indirectly told me that He could not provide the desired mercy without my forgiveness to the other party. ***1 Sam. 12:22-24; For the Lord will not abandon His people on account of His great name, because the Lord has been pleased to make you a people for Himself. Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you; but I will instruct you in the good and right way. Only fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you.***

I am more than concerned when I hear comments such as “I can’t forgive (whomever).” My sincere hope is that at the conclusion of this study we will all at least find some urgency in this teaching to be forgiving and take on the attitude to not leave any stones unturned as we seek to forgive anybody and everybody that has offended us. We should know from our study of the Bible that our lack of seeing the necessity to forgive others has a direct effect on our being forgiven by God the Father. For as we have learned it is plainly stated in Matt. 6:15 that if we choose to not forgive those who have offended us it will affect our heavenly Father’s forgiveness toward us: ***But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.***

It must be mentioned here that the forgiveness that we show toward our brothers and sisters is not the same as the salvational forgiveness that our Lord Jesus Christ provided for us. Our willingness to forgive does not provide salvation but it is the result of being shown mercy and grace by Christ Jesus that is in our salvation. Our forgiveness that we show towards others is just as beneficial to us as it is to the other person as it restores relationship. We are not anyone’s Savior. It is also imperative for us to realize that forgiveness is an attribute and a choice that we make to emulate the nature of our heavenly Father and it is His restorative power that makes it possible for us to restore relationships, not only with the offending party but to God as well. Why? Because to forgive is a manifestation of love and to not forgive one another violates one of Jesus Christ’s foundational principles of fellowshiping with each other as we read in Matt. 22:36-40; ***“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”*** If we in our stubborn pride cannot at least begin the process of forgiveness we have in effect presented a stumbling block before us that may prevent us from entering into everlasting life, because our heavenly Father cannot allow unresolved sin to enter into His kingdom. He has provided all that we need to resolve sin, but if we choose not to embrace what He has provided there is nothing more that He can do. We should not be naïve enough to think that we must maintain perfect forgiveness for the other party; while we are attached to these tents of skin we cannot do anything perfectly, but this does not excuse us from forgiving to the fullness of our capacity. So this begs the question, can *full* forgiveness be accomplished immediately? Full and perfect are basically the same words, we can accomplish full forgiveness if we are relating it to the fullness that our humanity can accomplish anything. As sinners anything we attempt is going to be tainted with sin and thus not complete. But even in this case, for most of us, we are dealing with self-vengeance seeking sinners and when someone hurts us deeply in our flesh we have a strong desire to sadistically hold onto that hurt in an amazing attempt to destroy ourselves while taking revenge on the other party. So even if we just begin the forgiveness process, which is still better than doing nothing, our Father can only forgive us to the same degree that we have become willing to forgive our neighbor. As proof of this truth I offer these words that Jesus Christ spoke to His disciples and is part of what for most of us was probably the first prayer we learned to recite; ***Matt. 6:12: And forgive us our debts as we have also forgiven our debtors.*** I’m not trying to suggest that by quoting this verse that our saving forgiveness can be accomplished by works, but what I am suggesting is that our forgiving others can be a manifestation of our heart’s condition concerning our relationship with God and the depths that we are willing to go to restore our relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. It should be noted here

that in Jewish literature sins are referred to as debts, not because they are so in themselves, for then it would be right to *do* them; debts should be paid. They are not debts that we owe God, but are so called because on account of them we owe satisfaction to the law and justice of God. The appropriate debts that we owe to God are love, obedience, and gratitude and if we default in these we owe the debt of punishment. Now these mentioned debts are innumerable and we are incapable of paying them in full, nor is any man (outside of the man-God Jesus Christ), capable of paying them for us. Therefore we are directed to pray, that God would forgive them, or remit the obligation to punishment that we are accountable for on account of our sin. This prayer presupposes a sense, an acknowledgement, and confession of sin and of inability to make satisfaction for it. God is the only One who can forgive it and He does for Christ's sake and on account of His shed blood, sacrifice and satisfaction of the requirements for righteousness being fulfilled. Our daily prayer is for the forgiveness of those who have offended us, and for those whom, we have offended. The forgiveness is not only offered to the perpetrators by us but it is also offered to God to forgive them, which is the true source of our ability to forgive. To be forgiving of the offense means, that we must dismiss or send the offenses away; *"as far as the east is from the west,"* so that they will never be found again to be used in any malicious manner. It goes without saying that this dismissal is effected by grace alone through Christ, by contrition and faith. In view of this remission that we are asking for, our hearts must be cleansed of all resentment against others. To dismiss our debtors means that we no longer consider them as debtors. Their debts to us are as nothing compared with what we owe God. Our forgiving others is the evidence that God's grace has really brought about faith in us and made us His children. The focus of this verse is the true repentance of the forgiver *who understands* the greatness of forgiveness that he or she has received through the mercy of Jesus Christ. A forgiver gratefully extends such forgiveness to others for their wrongs committed against them. To forgive completely requires one of the most difficult of all adjustments to who we are in our sinful nature, but Jesus Christ describes it so simply. Just as we need forgiveness, so it goes that we must be forgivers. Jesus Christ is not asking us to initiate greater forgiveness than He is willing to offer us; no matter if we are abused and abandoned, suffer terrorism or oppression, nor if the object of our love has found another. Jesus Christ knows our wounds and our hurts. Through our tears God's love begins to heal. That's why forgiveness is complicated, but simple. And it's always the direction God wants our heart to turn, never toward revenge or hate. Forgiving others bears witness to the power of God's forgiveness over the worst atrocities that life can deal us.

Back when I first considered becoming a Christian, the word "Christian," I noticed, had become less of a distinguishing word to becoming more of a generic word that fit a lot of categories of people. So the church, in its wisdom, sought out a more distinguishing word to apply to followers of Christ and soon we had become known as "believers." But now I fear that even the word "believers" has been applied to so many differing people that it has lost some of its distinguishing characteristics, at least in our society, to become more of a generic word also. So I thought of another title that would be appropriate for the followers of Jesus Christ, and that title is "forgivers." I know that for us to use this word to refer to ourselves sounds alien, and it can bring uniformed judgment from outsiders, upon ourselves. But what better word could we use to align ourselves with Jesus Christ. I think that if we distinguished ourselves as being forgiving it might more appropriately represent what the banner that we live under, that is "followers of Christ, the most perfect of all forgivers ." I believe this word has the same Biblical value as

Christian or believer. I believe also, that it is, at this time, most appropriate for us to pray for those who are struggling to find forgiveness for an offense committed against them. I know that sometimes offenses committed against us can have an irreversible life changing affect on us, but we also must realize that we do not want to bear the consequences of dismissing God's mercy and grace by being unforgiving toward others, one of those consequences being our inability to fellowship with God because of our disobedience. By being unforgiving it puts us into a diabolical position of hearing the words that Jesus Christ warned us about, that no one here wants to hear at the end of our time here on earth, and those words are, ***"I never knew you; depart from me."***

THE



# POWER OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

*...God's forgiveness is not only all powerful,*

*But also all empowering...*