

WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

Forgiveness in the Old Testament ("*Salach*") always has God as the subject.

That is to say that only God can truly forgive.

The Psalmist cries out in Psalm 51:4, "*Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned*"

Why? Because the term "*Salach*" refers not to an overlooking of an offense but rather to a payment rendered for the offense. Thus when used, it is repeatedly coupled with

the term "atonement", ie., Lev 4:26,31,35; 5:10,13,16,18; Numbers 15:25,28

Hebrews 9:22b states "*without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness*"

True forgiveness requires complete and total restitution which no man could ever pay or make right all his wrongs!

So what does it mean when Christ commands us to forgive?

Matthew 6:14,15 "*Aphiemi*" - to send away

Luke 6:37 "*Apoluo*" - to let loose ... release"

Ephesians 4:32 "*Charizomai*" - to show unconditional favor

Note: There is no command to forget, that is a divine act (cf. Is 43:25), yet we are to let go of our vindictive spirit and be gracious to others whether they deserve it or not!

Matthew 6:12-16 and Matthew 18:21-35 states that forgiveness is that which a believer does because of his overwhelming gratitude for God's patience compassion, mercy and release towards him. All wrongdoing done to the believer seem insignificant and meaningless in comparison.

The absence of faith and gratitude means the absence of the forgiving spirit God requires of man.

A further note:

Faith believes: 1) God is just (Romans 12:19)

2) God is an advocate to those who walk in His ways
(Romans 8:28)