

## THE PROBLEM OF UNFORGIVENESS

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Banska Bystrica, 16th November 2016

<p>καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν·<sup>14</sup> Ἐὰν γὰρ ἀφήτε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν, ἀφήσει καὶ ὑμῖν ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος·<sup>15</sup> ἔαν δὲ μὴ ἀφήτε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, οὐδὲ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ἀφήσει τὰ παραπτώματα ὑμῶν.</p>	<p><b>Mt 6:12</b> ...<b>forgive</b> us our debts, <b>as we</b> also have forgiven our debtors. ... <b>14</b> For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, <b>15</b> but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.</p>
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[CHAMBERS] Broken Pottery (Jeremiah 19) → A potter’s vessel, that cannot be made whole again. Jer 19:11 → There are two sins of spiritual condition that cannot be forgiven; the first is sin against man—spiritual murder, unforgiving dislike; the second is sin against God—shutting God out from worship and everything. Neither of these sins are acts, they are conditions. When a man holds either, God is outside him in every sense, holding to him only by the Creator relationship, and He keeps that hold against the will of the man. The ordinary occurrences of life reveal to us the condition of our hearts and minds—a dislike that will not forgive, that has not the slightest intention of making any excuse. That is a natural condition that cannot be forgiven until a man wishes to turn from it. The great characteristic of the supernatural grace of God is put by Jesus on the line of forgiveness. Forgiveness is not an act, it is the supernatural manifestation of a miracle within us. (CHAMBERS, O. *Notes on Jeremiah*)

- “If forgiveness forgave only the forgivable, then, Derrida claims, the very idea of forgiveness would disappear.” (DERRIDA, J. *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, London : Routledge, 2001, p. vii)
- Forgiveness is often confounded, sometimes in a calculated fashion, with related themes: excuse, regret, amnesty, prescription, etc.; so many significations of which certain come under law, a penal law from which forgiveness must in principle remain heterogeneous and irreducible. The proliferation of scenes of repentance, or of asking ‘forgiveness’, signifies, no doubt, a universal urgency of memory: it is necessary to turn toward the past; and it is necessary to take this act of memory, of self-accusation, of ‘repentance’, of appearance [comparution] (Ibid. p. 27)

[E. STANLEY JONES] We must reconcile in four directions: (1) between man and God, (2) between man and man, (3) between man and himself, and (4) between man and nature. This fourfold reconciliation is the one business of the Christian; all else is subsidiary. If we are not reconciling, we are not Christians. The Way is

the way of reconciliation. The centre of that reconciliation is the reconciliation between man and God. As long as the central estrangement is there between man and God, then all relations have the shadow of estrangement upon them. Life lacks central harmony. Unreconciled with God you are unreconciled with yourself, with your brother, with nature. (JONES, E. S. *The Way*, London : Hodder & Stoughton, 1947, p. 317)

## 0. INTRODUCTION: KEY CONNOTATIONS

- (1) **Law** – authority, judgment, (2) **Psychology** – grudge, antipathy, aversion, enmity, grievance, hate; (3) **Relationships** – loneliness, exclusion, isolation, (4) **Cooperation** – unreliability, insubmission, intrigue (5) **Worldview** – ultimate punishment...

## 1. SOURCES OF “GRIEVANCES”

- reasons we cannot forgive: (1) we call “forgiveness” something else; (2) We play “god”, (3) We do not know our own debts

### 1.1. CREATION (NATURE)

- disagreement with reality: (1) space, limits, (2) time, aging
- “**Gn 1:31** And **God saw** everything that he had made, and behold, it was very **good**.”
- → **reconciliation** with reality (creation)
- Abandon wild imaginations and nonsensical expectations!

### 1.2. SELF

- self-rejection; perfectionism;
- **1Cor 4:3** In fact, I do not even judge myself.
- → **humility**, being real

### 1.3. OTHERS (SOCIETY)

- grudge

#### 1.3.1. OFFENDED BY UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS

- Saul ↔ David (→ 1Cor 12)
- → **submission** to God’s electing decision

#### 1.3.2. OFFENDED BY WRONG-DOING

- **Mt 18:35** So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.
- **Eph 4:32** Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you
- → **submission** to God’s decision to forgive → THE CROSS

### 1.4. GOD

- You cannot forgive God – the ultimate arrogance is to place God under our judgment
  - **Mal 3:13** "Your words have been hard against me (הִזְקִי עָלַי דְּבָרֵיכֶם), says the LORD.
  - **2Cor 5:19-20** ...in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, **not counting** their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.
- → **repentance** of rebellion

## 2. REASONS FOR UNFORGIVING SPIRIT

- ...of real debts/sins/hurts

## 2.1. PSYCHOLOGICAL

- pain (need for healing)... **Joel 2:25** I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten

## 2.2. PLAYING GOD

- unwillingness to forgive → self-importance;
- **Ex 34:6-7** "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup> keeping steadfast love for thousands, **forgiving** iniquity and transgression and sin (נִשָּׂא עֵוֹן וְפֹשַׁע וְחַטָּאת), but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."
- **Ps 130:4** But with you **there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.**
  - (כִּי־עֲמֹד הַסְּלִיחָה לְמַעַן תִּירָא) → gratitude; admiration; accessibility; worship;

## 2.3. LACK OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE

- Mt 18 → how much have I been forgiven?
- how serious is my sin?

## 3. TO REMEMBER

- We can *forgive* only where forgiveness is *applicable*.
- Genuine forgiveness must be directly related to the *forgiving God*.
- The power to forgive comes from the Cross of Christ. (the joy of having been forgiven)