
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **Will you forgive me for forgiving you?**

Does this sound like a strange question? Well ... it should.

A few weeks ago I presented a study on Bible Talk asking this question: **Should Christians "just forgive" others even when no repentance is present?**

I presented two main passages demonstrating that repentance must occur before a Christian can forgive someone:

Luke 17:3-4

³ "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if **he repents**, forgive him.

⁴ "And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, '**I repent,**' you shall forgive him."

Clearly Jesus taught repentance must occur before forgiveness can be granted. The second passage presented was:

Matthew 18:15-17

¹⁵ "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

¹⁶ "But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'

¹⁷ "And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

This too clearly teaches repentance must occur before repentance can be granted. I would encourage you to go to the website and re-listen to the entire presentation.

OPPOSITION

To my surprise there was much opposition to my presentation. As a matter of fact, one church leader gave a sermon to his congregation entitled, "*Just Forgive*." He attempted to teach that the "*just-forgive-without-repentance*" theory was scriptural and that Jesus taught such a doctrine. He taught we should not hold bitterness and hatred in our hearts but, instead, we should "just forgive."

Another church leader wrote to me saying something very similar. He wrote:

I believe the definition of forgive is, "*I will not hold hatred in my heart.*" I pray for them and allow God to handle it. God forbid if someone killed one of our loved ones, but if it did happen, would you not give it to God? I will not allow an unrepentant person control my emotions. "*Forgive - To stop feeling anger toward (someone who has done something wrong) : to stop blaming (someone).*"

(Email letter, Feb 10, 2016)

So, both these church leaders are saying the same thing. They are saying:

- It's wrong to hold bitterness in your heart toward someone.
- It's wrong to hold hatred in your heart toward someone.
- You must "*just forgive*" and let God "*handle it.*"

What should we think about this?

ANALYSIS

Let's consider what is being said in light of the scripture.

First: The "just forgive" theory equates non-forgiveness of unrepentant-sinners with "harboring hatred and bitterness in your heart."

Since I'm harboring hatred and bitterness in my heart, I need to "just forgive" and "let it go" and "hand it over to God" and let God take care of things. But if I'm harboring hatred and bitterness in my heart, it looks like I need to do two things:

- First, it seems I need to ask God to forgive me for having hatred and bitterness in my heart.
- Then, I need to "just forgive" the hoodlum who has violated me and my family, but who won't repent.

So let's apply this to real-life situations.

Let's take the so-often-committed case of marital-cheating. Barbie finds out Ken has been cheating with another woman. If Barbie needs to "just-forgive" Ken, it must mean Barbie has hatred and bitterness in her heart. If Barbie has hatred and bitterness in her heart, she's as much of a sinner as Ken. Barbie needs to simply forget about what Ken has done and she should fall down on her knees and pray to God to forgive her of hatred and bitterness that drives her to want to forgive Ken. If Barbie should ever think she could divorce unrepentant-Ken, rather than "just forgive" him, then Barbie has a real problem. In fact, the best thing Barbie can do it become completely oblivious to Ken's cheating. Let him cheat day after day, because if Barbie ever reaches the point where she needs to forgive Ken, it means she has hatred and bitterness in her heart and now, unrepentant-Ken isn't the one with the problem – Barbie's the one with the problem.

Let's not stop here. Let's apply this to a pedophile. Suppose a man at church rapes your teen-aged daughter and won't admit to doing wrong. The "just-forgive" theory says you are the one with the problem – because if you think the pedophile needs forgiveness in the first place, that must mean you're harboring hatred and bitterness in your heart – and now you are the one with the problem – not the pedophile. And if the congregation thinks the pedophile should repent, then the entire congregation has a problem – not the pedophile.

Second: The "just forgive" theory says God "harbors hatred and bitterness in His heart."

If even needing-to-forgive implies hatred and bitterness inside your heart to begin with, what does this imply about God? Does He have hatred in His heart? Does He harbor bitterness? This is absurd and the absurdity demonstrates the falseness of the "just forgive" theory.

Third: The "just forgive" advocates won't just forgive me.

Why are these church leaders writing to me? Why are they preaching against my presentation? Why don't they "just forgive" me for teaching what I've taught?

WHAT DOES THE SCRIPTURE SAY?

Romans 4:3 asks a good question, "What does the scripture say?" We need to ask that in regard to the "just forgive" theory – "What does the scripture say?"

Here's what the scripture says:

Luke 17:3-4

³ "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and **if he repents**, forgive him.

⁴ "And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, '**I repent**,' you shall forgive him."

- You will notice Jesus is the One requiring repentance.
- You will also notice Jesus did not say, "just forgive the one who sins against you."
- You will notice Jesus did not teach people are holding hatred and bitterness in their hearts until they do forgive the perpetrator.

Requiring repentance is a rule Jesus made – not me.

What does the scripture say? Here's what the scripture says:

Matthew 18:15-17

¹⁵ "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

¹⁶ "But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'

¹⁷ "And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

The "just forgive" theory says Jesus is wrong about this. The "just forgive" theory says:

- You should not go talk to your brother about his fault, because if you do – it must mean you have hatred and bitterness in your heart.
- You should not take witnesses because then you would be escalating the problem – not the brother who has sinned against you.
- You should not take the matter before the church because now the entire church will hold hatred and bitterness supreme in the congregation and the entire hateful, bitter congregation will go to hell for even the thought that the perpetrator needs forgiveness.

The "just forgive" theory makes the words of Jesus in Mt 18 completely meaningless. Any doctrine that makes the words of Jesus meaningless is a false and dangerous doctrine.

What does the scripture say? Here's what the scripture says:

Matthew 5:23-24

²³ "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,
²⁴ "leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

The "just forgive" theory would forbid preachers from preaching this to sinners. Instead, the congregation should be admonished to "just forgive" people and "turn it over to God" and "let Him handle it."

SUMMARY

The "just forgive" theory is wrong and dangerous. It is dangerous because:

- It absolutely denies and rejects the very words of Jesus in Luke 17:3-4.
- It completely abolishes all commands to administer discipline on unruly church members (Mt 18:15-17).
- It makes God Himself a sinner for not "just forgiving" sinners.

Furthermore, the advocates of the "just forgive" theory prove themselves they don't believe their own doctrine.

- Because when someone rapes their daughter, they want repentance on the part of the rapist.
- Because when someone causes trouble in their congregation, they want the trouble-maker to stop making trouble or else they will withdraw fellowship from him.
- Because when a spouse becomes unfaithful, they suddenly start thinking of divorce and remarriage to another who will prove faithful.
- Because when I teach against their "just forgive" theory, they don't "just forgive" me for teaching against their theory.

Simply put: The "just forgive" theory is a false doctrine that is not practiced by anyone nor is there a shred of proof in the Bible for such a false doctrine.

The only effort by anyone to produce scripture for the "just forgive" theory is the passage found in Lk 23:34 when Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." This passage does not teach the "just forgive" theory as we demonstrated in our first study on this topic. (I invite you to go to the first study and reexamine the material relative to Lk 23:34.)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Well ... thanks for listening to our message this week. We invite you to visit our website www.WillOfTheLord.com. There you may download the notes and the audio file of the message you just listened to.

Call again next week when we consider a new subject on ***Bible Talk***.