

## FORGIVENESS

(Part 3 of 3)

In part two of Forgiveness, Peter put a numerical number to the times that one should be forgiven. Peter was still thinking like the scribes and Pharisees and like the way that fallen human nature always thinks – there is a limit to anything human nature would say. Peter, one author said, “was thinking in the measurable and limited terms of law, not the immeasurable and unlimited terms of grace. Law keeps count; grace does not.”

Jesus said to Peter, “I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:22). Jesus was extending the legal limit of forgiveness to Peter. He was not speaking of a law that governs forgiveness or a limit at all. By seventy times seven, He did not mean 490. By all practical purposes, He used this term to indicate that forgiveness goes beyond counting. Record keeping is not the issue, and a Christian with a forgiving heart thinks nothing about it. It has been said, “A Christian forgives the hundredth offense or the thousandth just as readily and graciously as the first – because that is the way he is forgiven by God.”

Luke records that Jesus said, “Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him” (Luke 17:3-4).

In Luke chapter 17 and verses three through four, Jesus was not setting a daily limit, but rather the opposite. He was speaking of repeated, regular sinning that is committed many times a day, day after day, and of corresponding repeated forgiveness. He was saying that even if a fellow Christian sins against you every day for seven times each day, you should be ready and willing to forgive him that often. This is hard stuff, but it’s the kind of stuff that each one of us need.

Never take your forgiveness lightly. Paul said to the church at Ephesus, “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:31-32).

If you expect to mature as a Christian, you must be forgiving, and must have a forgiving heart. If you violate this scriptural principle, you one day will be hurt deeply.

Jerry W. Arnold  
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