

Call to Obedience # 425
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
www.schultze.org

Forgive Us Our Trespases

As We Forgive Others Their Trespases

by Reimar Schultze

But if you do not forgive others their trespases, neither will your Father forgive your trespases (Matt. 6:15 ESV). We know from this that we will not be forgiven without forgiving others, but the question I ask you today is this: “How do I forgive others? Do I forgive others conditionally or unconditionally?”

The answer is: “We are to forgive others as Jesus forgave us.” The key word in forgiving others is in the adverb “as,” meaning in the same manner and spirit as Jesus forgave us. We must require of others what Jesus required of us to be forgiven, and that includes repentance. This is why Jesus said, *Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him* (Luke 17:3). This means Jesus wants you to deal with your brother’s sin and He wants it done on His terms. And His terms include repentance. Therefore we have no authority to forgive anyone except under the condition that they repent.

When you quickly, thoughtlessly and carelessly forgive a brother unconditionally, this is unscriptural and you may encourage him to keep sinning. The sinner must realize that God’s holiness demands justice and that sin separates him from God whether it is sin against God or man. We naturally tend to excuse ourselves from the responsibility to deal with our renegade brother, saying, “Let the Holy Spirit deal with him.” This is seldom God’s way. God’s first approach is for the Holy Spirit to work through *you* in this matter, for *you* explain to him what damage his sin has done and for *you* to explain to him what wonderful joy and peace would fill his soul if he would only surrender all. You are God’s messenger. Do not be like Jonah and run off to Tarshish when you are called to go to Nineveh.

My friend, you must remember that you have received authority to rebuke and restore your brother. You have the promise of anointing for this and you have divine authority to bind and loose in this regard. Notice that Jesus is very precise in saying so to His disciples: *And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose*

soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained (John 20:22-23). Do not let the fear of man prevent you from doing what God has commanded and ordained you to do.

But if you do not have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you, that authority to bind and to loose and to forgive sins is not yours. In that case you must first remove the beam that is in your own eye before you can remove the splinter in your brother's eye (Matt. 7:3-5).

Keep in mind that it is not only God's business to deal with sin. It is also yours. But do not use the common understanding of "rebuke." In the Bible, "to rebuke" does not mean to condemn, to disgrace, to put to shame or to chide. It means to lovingly persuade the guilty before God as one who also is weak, as Paul put it: *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted* (Gal. 6:1).

DO NOT EVER ALLOW THE GUILTY TO PERSUADE YOU TO BELIEVE THAT FORGIVENESS CAN BE OBTAINED WITHOUT REPENTANCE BECAUSE OF JESUS' WORDS ON THE CROSS: *...Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do...* (Luke 23:34). What Jesus meant on the cross is this: "I forgive you for your blindness of not recognizing Me for Who I am, but it does not imply I forgive you for all the sins you ever committed in your life. You need confession and repentance for those as I preached to you over and over." And in reality, it was not man who put Jesus on the cross; it was God Himself who offered His Son as a sacrifice for our sins (Rom. 8:32). When the multitude cried out to crucify Him, they simply followed their leaders in unthinking obedience.

Peter put this all together in his very first sermon on the Day of Pentecost, addressing the Jews like this: *And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers* (Acts 3:17 ESV). Then Paul picks up the theme later on Mars Hill saying: *The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent* (Acts 17:30 ESV). With this verse, Paul puts the doctrine of unconditional forgiveness to rest once and for all.

When Jesus told us to rebuke our brother who has sinned, He simply drew from the book of Leviticus in the Old Testament: *You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the*

LORD (Lev. 19:17-18 NKJV). Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful! This is a perfect picture of a saint: He has neither a grudge nor any resentment towards his brother who sinned against him but only divine love. He has no enmity towards his enemy. Yet, he fulfills his responsibility toward him, acting as God's co-worker in the salvation of his soul.

Jesus practiced what He preached. Remember how He rebuked Peter for his wrong words by calling him Satan (Mark 8:33). He rebuked all of His disciples for their lack of faith (Mark 16:14). The Apostle Paul instructed Titus to rebuke the Cretians sharply, *...that they may be sound in the faith* (Titus 1:13). Preachers are to rebuke their people as needed: *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke...* (2 Tim. 4:2).

The moment your brother comes and asks you for forgiveness for the wrong he has done unto you, you must become an evangelist, a watchman on the wall for him as the Scriptures say: *When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand* (Eze. 3:18); and: *Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death...* (James 5:19-20).

The natural man shrinks back from meddling with another man's sins. He pulls back from offending people and making enemies. But the spiritual man is endued with boldness from the Holy Spirit and love for the souls of the lost. He is willing to lose his reputation and yes, even his life to pull someone out of the eternal flames of everlasting darkness. It is not love if you let your brother drown in his sins to face everlasting separation from his Savior when you could throw him a life vest. Stop worrying about offending people. Whenever heaven and hell meet, there is great upheaval. In this process, many will be offended. Jesus said: *Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets* (Luke 6:26); and: *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword* (Matt. 10:34).

Yes, Jesus is sweet to the saints, but He also came to be the salt of the earth. He offended many. His family thought He had gone mad (Mark 3:21). His hometown people dragged Him out of town to kill Him (Luke 4:17-29). The Gadarenes begged Him to leave their country because He destroyed their swine

business (Luke 8:37). The Pharisees wanted to stone Him and cast Him out of the temple (John 8:59). Finally, they killed Him. He gave His life to save others. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said: "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die." Though you will offend many, yet it will be said of you by some: ...*How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!* (Rom. 10:15). You should proclaim the message of hope: *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price* (Is. 55:1). Be ever diligent proclaiming this message of good will.

Please take this to heart because one of the first sins of the first man ever born was that he refused to be his brother's keeper (Gen. 4:9). Do not allow your brother to be guilty of this type of sin. Do not say that somebody else's sin is not your business. It is your business. You are your brother's keeper.

Notice the frequency and graciousness that you are to exercise towards those who repent. Look at the text concerning your brother's need of repentance in its entirety. 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).

Seven times in the same DAY? That is incredible! Can you wrap your mind around that? Oh, the mercy of God, the mercy of God, the mercy and longsuffering of God! But again, every word of forgiveness can only be given after repentance has been evident.

Some are weak of constitution: they repent and obey, they sin and then repent again and so on and on. Yet some of them finally become solid in the life of faith. Remember Thomas, the doubting disciple. He lagged behind in believing in Jesus' resurrection. But once he got it, he got it and was martyred for Jesus in faraway India. Do not be harsh with those who are slow. Remember that Jesus wanted them and He also wants all of you. This is why Paul said: *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men* (1 Thes. 5:14).

Again, you need to be aware of a resentful spirit within you towards those who have wronged you and yet have failed to ask you for forgiveness. You must have love towards all, even toward your enemies who spitefully use you, for the Lord commands you to: ...*Love your enemies, do good to them*

which hate you (Luke 6:27). Should you forgive them without repentance? *No*.
But should you help them to get onto the road of repentance? *Yes*.

Call to Obedience # 425

PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA www.schultze.org