

## THE DOCTRINE OF FORGIVENESS (11)

If the saved offender does not own up to their sin and they are part of the church, then the steps of Matthew 18:15-17 should be followed. First, there is to be private confrontation. Second, there is to be plural confrontation. Third, there is to be public confrontation that could lead to church excommunication.

In some cases of sin, if connected to the church, a decision may be made to jump over steps one, two and three and immediately go to excommunication (I Corinthians 5:5-8). If the person is part of the church and refuses to acknowledge their sin, then these steps are to be followed (II Thess. 3:14-15).

**QUESTION #10** – Doesn't the challenge we have to turn the other cheek mean we should grant forgiveness unconditionally?

One text that is often cited for this view is Matthew 5:39-41. Paul actually refers to this in Romans 12:17-21. **What is often overlooked in this context is the central point. The central point is not forgiveness, but retaliation.** We are not to return evil for evil and we are not to carry out our own revenge. In fact, Paul said we are to leave that to God. This is not, however, a text that promotes the idea of granting forgiveness to those who do not say they are sorry.

**QUESTION #11** – Didn't Jesus ask God to forgive His crucifiers while hanging on the cross?

**The answer is "yes" He did (Luke 23:34).** However, there are certain things that are overlooked about this prayer. **First** of all, He did not grant forgiveness Himself to those leaders who had committed those crimes against Him. In fact, He did not forgive the nation Israel for rejecting Him (Matt. 23:37-39; Luke 23:28-31). He prayed to the Father about it. **Second**, neither Jesus nor the Father forgave the religious and political leadership who crucified Jesus Christ (John 19:11; Matt. 27:18, 24). **Third**, both the Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul specifically said that these were godless people who had killed Jesus Christ and they were guilty and not forgiven of their crimes (Acts 2:23; 3:14-15; 5:30; 7:52; 10:39). **Fourth**, the prayer is made in the framework of all of His theology.

If one tracks the theology of Jesus Christ through the Scripture, His whole instruction was based upon a forgiveness granted when one comes to terms with their sin (Luke 24:46-47). There are sins that are committed that cause God to abandon people and not save them, but condemn them to hell (i.e. Rom. 1:18-32). What Jesus is praying is that God would be willing to forgive any of these people who would come to terms with their sin and believe on Him. He is praying that God would leave the door open for one to believe on Him and be saved.

**QUESTION #12** – Doesn't the Bible say that love covers a multitude of sins?

There are passages that do say this. Passages such as Proverbs 10:12 and I Peter 4:8. Perhaps the most significant passage on this subject is James 5:20. It is specifically in a context of admitting sin and confessing sin and confronting one with sin (James 5:16-20). It is not loving to leave someone in a state of sin knowing they are heading to serious judgment.