

FIVE KINDS OF FORGIVENESS

I. There is eternal forgiveness—this relates to life:

- A. The forgiveness that comes with our salvation is eternal forgiveness.
- B. Once we are forgiven, we are forgiven forever; we receive eternal life forever, and we are justified forever—Luke 24:47; Rom. 4:7-8; Psa. 103:12.
- C. The moment we believe into the Lord Jesus, we are forgiven of all our sins; the Lord removes all our sins, and we are left with no trace of sin before God—Heb. 8:12; Acts 10:43.

II. There is instrumental forgiveness—this relates to the church:

- A. In sending the Holy Spirit to His church, the Lord charged the church to be His representative on the earth; forgiveness is now granted through the church—John 20:22-23.
- B. Instrumental forgiveness is God's proclamation of forgiveness through man; if a person is newly saved but does not know the meaning of forgiveness, it is good for a representative of the church to stand up and say to him, "You have accepted the Lord today; you can thank Him because He has forgiven you of your sins!"

III. There is restorative forgiveness—this relates to fellowship:

- A. When we sin in our daily life, our conscience condemns us, and our fellowship with God is interrupted—Acts 24:16; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:3, 9.
- B. Our Father-son relationship with God in life can never be changed, but sin can damage our fellowship with God; we have to confess our sins and offenses to God before we can secure our forgiveness in fellowship—1 John 1:7, 9; 2:1-2.
- C. If we have offended our brothers, we must confess to them as well—Matt. 5:23-24.
- D. We have to maintain ourselves in constant fellowship with God; when we come to God, we have to acknowledge our sinful acts honestly and ask Him for forgiveness; if we do this, our fellowship with God will be restored, and our heart will be filled with the joy of salvation—Psa. 51:12; Prov. 15:13a; 17:22a; 15:15b.
- E. The secret of the Christian life is maintaining ourselves in constant fellowship with God; if we fail, we must ask God for forgiveness, and we must recover the sweet fellowship that we had with God—1 John 1:9.

IV. There is governmental forgiveness—this relates to discipline:

- A. This kind of forgiveness involves God's arrangement, sovereignty, discipline, and hand; God's government is His way of doing things; it is His administration.
- B. God's governmental forgiveness is related to the way that God manages, rules over, and deals with us—Gal. 6:7.
- C. When we sin against God, He will forgive us when we confess our sins to Him; our fellowship with Him can be restored, but He may change His way with us.
- D. David confessed his sins and admitted his guilt in order to be forgiven by God (2 Sam. 12:13; Psa. 51), but God would cause the son born to Uriah's wife to die and the sword to not depart from David's house (2 Sam. 12:7-15).
- E. When we are under God's governmental discipline, the only thing that we can do is learn to humble ourselves under His mighty hand (1 Pet. 5:5-7); the more we reject God's governmental hand, the more problems we will encounter.
- F. After Moses struck the rock in Meribah (Num. 20:10-12, 24; 27:14), he fell under God's governmental hand:

1. In being angry when God was not angry, Moses did not represent God rightly in His holy nature, and in striking the rock twice, he did not keep God's word in His economy; thus, Moses offended both God's holy nature and His divine economy.
 2. Because of this, even though he was intimate with God and may be considered a companion of God (Exo. 33:11), Moses lost the right to enter into the good land.
 3. In all that we say and do concerning God's people, our attitude must be according to God's holy nature, and our actions must be according to His divine economy; this is to sanctify Him.
- G. We must learn to be generous to others and learn always to forgive; if we criticize others lightly, condemn others easily, keep complaining about the conduct of others, and continue to count the ill-treatment we receive from them, this will bring us under God's governmental hand; if we are severe toward others, God will also be severe toward us—Matt. 6:15; 18:23-35:
1. We have to learn to fear God, to revere God, to respect God, to honor God, to be in awe of God—Psa. 2:11-12; 86:11; 2 Cor. 5:10-11; Isa. 11:2.
 2. When others are in trouble, it is the time for us to help them, not the time for us to criticize them—cf. Gen. 14:14-16.
 3. There are many brothers who have fallen miserably today for one reason only—they have criticized others too severely in the past; many of their weaknesses today are the very weaknesses that they criticized in the past.
 4. We must be generous toward others if we want to avoid God's governmental hand; may we learn to love and forbear one another—Eph. 4:32.

V. There is kingdom forgiveness—this relates to administration:

- A. If we treat people too harshly or have an unforgiving spirit in this age, we will be disciplined in the kingdom age—Luke 6:38; Matt. 18:33-35.
- B. If we treat others in a mean way and criticize others mercilessly, God will deal with us in the same way in the future—7:1-2.
- C. May the Lord grant us the grace to be those who show mercy to others and who do not deal with others in meanness, sharpness, or severity, so that we can obtain mercy from God in that day—5:7; cf. 2 Tim. 1:16, 18.