

Forgiving A Person in Your Heart

William MacDonald:

“And be ye kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” (Eph. 4:32 NASB)

There is a definite order to be followed in connection with Scriptural forgiveness. If we would follow this order we would save ourselves a lot of headaches and heartaches.

The first thing to do when you have been wronged is to forgive that person in your heart. You don't tell him yet that he has been forgiven, but by forgiving him in your heart, you leave the matter between the Lord and him. This prevents your gastric juices from turning into sulphuric acid, and saves you from other horrible physical and emotional disorders.

Next you go to the brother and rebuke him (Lu. 17:3). Instead of blabbing to others about how you have been wronged, “Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone” (Mt. 18:15). Try to contain the problem as much as possible, that is, try to keep it as private as you can.

If he does not confess and ask forgiveness, then go to him with one or two witnesses (Mt. 18:16). This provides adequate Scriptural testimony as to the offender's attitude.

If he is still unbending, then you take the matter to the assembly, accompanied by the witnesses. If he refuses to listen to the judgment of the assembly, then, of course, he is dis-fellowshipped (Matt. 18:17).

But if at any point during this process, he repents, then you forgive him (Lu. 17:3). You have already forgiven him in your heart, but now you administer forgiveness to him. Here it is important not to gloss over the matter. Don't say “Oh that's alright. You really didn't do anything wrong.” Rather say, “I very gladly forgive you. Now the whole matter is closed. Let's get down and pray together.”

The shame of having to confess and repent may deter him from wronging you again. But even if he repeats his sin and then repents, you must forgive him. Even if he does it seven times in one day and repents seven times, you must forgive him—whether you think he's sincere or not (Lu. 17:4).

We must never forget that we have been forgiven millions. We must not hesitate to forgive others for what amounts to a few dollars, figuratively speaking (Mt. 18:23-35).