

FORGIVING GOD

The idea that God may somehow be fallible is a key component of our pop-psychology culture which is constantly looking for someone to blame for its ills. This humanistic philosophy is elbowing its way into our theology. The thought that good people should not suffer and only the faithless ones should is a concept reinforced by human nature and the “name it and claim it” preachers. We all want to believe that if we do the right things we will have a perfect, painless, stress-free life. The problem is that in the equation of life we have a sovereign God who at unexpected moments injects issues of painful significance, which radically alter our course.

The sovereign God of the scriptures is not a reactionary, knee-jerk kind of God ruled by His subjects. He is not motivated by our screams of frustration but by our faith. Our faith moves God more than our wants or needs. Humanity has often manufactured gods in its own image for the sake of relation and control. We must admit, an almighty God, who is unpredictable, is unwelcome in our palm pilot-driven world. God has a mind of His own and is not interested in playing on our team.

Instead of getting the point and changing, we get more creative and assume that God made an error. Therefore, we are excused from moving our membership to His team. We have a choice, to hold a grudge against God for destroying our lives or to forgive Him and hope for better days. In either case, we fail to learn valuable lessons in life and faith in God. We know it is scriptural to forgive, but forgiving God is based upon the false assumption that God has wronged us.

In the more than seventy times that forgiveness is mentioned in the scriptures it is never in the context of man forgiving God. We find men seeking forgiveness from God and men seeking forgiveness from men. We see God forgiving men and men forgiving others, however, there is no biblical precedent for men forgiving God.

In the lives of Job and Joseph there was an avalanche of painful circumstances which God allowed to enter their lives. Any of those circumstances God could have over-ruled and prevented. God chose to take them through the fire instead of around it. God is more interested in His glory and ultimate purpose in our lives than our comfort.

Neither Job nor Joseph held a grudge against God for their life-altering experiences. They did not need to forgive God, instead Job said, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15). Joseph modeled Romans 8:28 when he said, “ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good” (Genesis 50:20).

In scripture, we find instruction to seek forgiveness of God for our trespasses and debts. We also find instruction to forgive others debts and trespasses. Debt in the context of forgiveness is *opheilema* in the Greek language meaning: something owed; a due; morally, a fault. Trespass in the context of forgiveness is *hamartano* in the Greek language meaning: to miss the mark (and so not share in the prize), to err, especially (morally) to sin.

The only condition for offering forgiveness is debt or trespass. If there is no debt, and no trespass, then there is no need for forgiveness. God does not owe us a debt, nor has He committed a trespass.

He has not committed a fault, and He has not missed the mark, erred or sinned. Consequently, there is no basis to claim that we can forgive God in any fashion.

There are people who are greatly offended with God, and we do see in scripture people pouring out their complaints to God. When we lay our case before the Lord, it is always in the context that ultimately what we want is His will for our lives. We are reminded that the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able, but will make a way of escape for us. When God turns up the heat, and we are tried by the fire, it is with the intent to purify us as gold not to destroy us. Should I forgive God for that?

When someone says they forgive us, we can assume we did something wrong, the person misunderstood us or they simply have the wrong person. What conclusion would God come to if he heard us forgiving Him? When John the Baptist was in prison, he sent his disciples to ask Jesus if He were the Christ. Jesus did not ask for forgiveness, rather he stated, "Blessed is he whosoever is not offended in me."

If we have been placed in difficult circumstances and have an offended spirit toward God, instead of forgiving God, we must ask God to forgive us for doubting His faithfulness and love. Any hurt that we have suffered outside of God's will is not His fault. Any hurt we have suffered in our childhood is a result of a sinful human will not subjected to God. Any disease or unexplainable affliction is an opportunity to learn lessons about ourselves and about God's love and faithfulness. The closure we need for our past is the understanding that His grace is sufficient for all of our needs. If we are held in the palm of God's hand then everything that touches us must first come through His fingers.

Paul's secret to being content in the Lord in spite of his hurts, was that he:

1. Focused on knowing Jesus

"For I am determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

2. Believed everything had a purpose

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Rom 8:28)

3. Relied on God's strength

"That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God."

"Christ bought you with his blood, and he means to have you for his own. If you will not come to him with a gentle breeze he will fetch you by a storm. Yield to the pressure of his love. Hardship, and want, and pain, are meant to bring you back, and God has used them to that end; and the day will come when you will say, "I bless God for the rough wave which washed me on shore. I bless God for the stormy providence which drowned my comfort, but saved my soul" (Excerpt from one of Spurgeon's sermon's pertaining to difficulties).