



A few basic principles about forgiveness are developed further in this new study, which is a sequel to the studies 'To forgive - word study'¹ and 'Forgiving in practice'².

Elements from the previous studies may be referred to in this study, without further mention.

Basis principle 1: Relationship between God and man.

God knew that man, created with a free will, would make wrong choices.

This is why He does not cast man away because of sin, for:

- *Like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be recovered, so we must die. But that is not what God desires; rather, he devises ways so that a banished person does not remain banished from him. (2 Samuel 14:14)*

He already demonstrated this with Adam and Eve, in paradise.

They had become frightened of Him because, after eating the forbidden fruit, they had discovered that they were naked.

God did not condemn them, however, and He proved this by clothing them with an animal skin, thus hiding their nakedness. (Genesis 3:8 et seq.)

This did not mean that their disobedience was without consequences – both for them and for the whole of creation, because their sin had brought about a definitive separation in the relationship between God and man.

In order to prevent man from remaining separated from Him, God, who is love, provided an 'exit', so that the **relationship** with Him could be **restored**.

This was fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ, as Paul writes:

- *He (God) **chose us in him (Jesus Christ) before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love. (Ephesians 1:4)***

Or, as the well-known text in the Gospel according to John states:

- *For God **so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)***

And Paul writes:

- *But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, **to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. (Galatians 4:4-5)***

For:

- *God demonstrates **his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (Romans 5:8-11)***

1 Study: To forgive – word study.

2 Study: Forgiving in practice.



- *All this is from God, **who reconciled us to himself through Christ** and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that **God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting** people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: **Be reconciled to God.** (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)*

What does this mean?

Because God is thrice holy³, no one who sins can remain in His presence.

This is why Satan and the angels who were unfaithful were banned from heaven and why natural, sinful man is also unable to enter into God's presence after his earthly life.

However, because God created man specifically to live in a **relationship** with him, He does not want access to heaven to be definitively denied to him.

Based on this desire God has determined a way, "so that a banished person does not remain banished from him." (2 Samuel 14:14)

In the sacrifice of Jesus Christ God gives man, in complete freedom, the possibility of entering into a relationship with Him.

The apostle Paul writes to those who accept forgiveness of their sins through faith in Jesus Christ:

- *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been **brought near by the blood of Christ.** (Ephesians 2:13)*

God wipes the sponge over the past for everyone who realises that he/she is unable to progress further in life and asks Jesus Christ to rescue him from his situation.

This is illustrated by the sacrifice for sin offered on the Great Day of Atonement.⁴

Man is thus set free from the sins of the past, **through faith in Jesus Christ.** In this way those who were far away from God come near to Him, because through the forgiveness of sins they are raised by God to new (spiritual) life.

Paul writes:

- *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Corinthians 5:17)*

The question is, whether the believer who has been raised to new spiritual life, reconciles himself to God as well.

Expressed otherwise:

Whether he/she is prepared to accept God as Father, living according to His will as He has had it recorded in the Bible.

³ Isaiah 6:3 - Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty, ... / Revelation 4:8 - Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.

⁴ Study: The Great Day of Atonement.



For:

- *To all who did receive him (Jesus), to those who believed in his name, he **gave the right to become children** of God —children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born (better: conceived⁵) of God. (John 1:12-13)⁶*

In fact, one is **not automatically** a child of God at conversion through faith in Jesus Christ, but one has received the right (the authority) to be adopted by God as His child.

This is tantamount to saying: that a believer desires to submit himself to the rule and the authority of Jesus Christ.⁷

When a believer makes this decision and thereby hands over the authority over his/her life to Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit pours out the love of God into his heart:

- *The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to **sonship**. And **by him we cry, "Abba, Father."** (Romans 8:15)*

(A desire that God had already expressed 600 years earlier: see Jeremiah 3:19.)

Crying **Abba/papa**: presupposes an intimate relationship between a child and its father.)

That Spirit causes a disciple to **reconcile himself to God, as Father** and go on to desire to live in obedience, according to His teaching, depending on Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd.⁸

Consider the parable of the prodigal son in this respect (Luke 15), how the youngest son considers his father as having died, claims his inheritance and departs abroad. Then, when he is totally impoverished, he decides to return, **to dare to look his father in the eye and to reconcile himself to him**, being willing to submit to him and to serve him **as a servant** (as a slave).

When he arrived home, however, he was once again accepted by the father **as his child**.

If he had not made the decision to **submit** to his father, he would have died of hunger and his father, who all the time remained ready to take him back again into the family, would have been unable to do anything for him.

Summary:

- When He created Adam and Eve God **knew** that they would become disobedient to the one commandment He had given them.
- He therefore **does not condemn man** because he sins, as Jesus said that He did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. (John 12:47)
- Because of His holiness God distances Himself because of sin and a separation comes into existence in the relationship between God and man.
- In spite of this the way to restoration remains open, as far as He is concerned, like the father in the parable, who continued to stand on the lookout to see whether his youngest son was coming home.

5 Study: To beget and to be born.

6 Study: Child of God.

7 Study: A different schematic presentation.

8 Study: Discipleship 2.



- The **separation** is only **removed** through faith in Jesus Christ.⁹
This is like the youngest son, who comes to his senses and realises what a situation he is in, sitting with the swine, and what future he could have with the father.
- He needs to **make a decision**, however, and to **get up** and go back to the father, determined to **serve him humbly**, as a slave.
- A believer who is prepared to accept the authority of the Triune God over his life and, therefore, reconciles himself to God, is received by Him with open arms and adopted by Him with the right of a son.¹⁰
Like the father in the story who embraces his son who returns.
Remark: The right of a son means that God makes no distinction between boys and girls, men and women. They all have the same rights and obligations as far as He is concerned.
- A child will live for ever in the Father's house.

Important points:

If one does not wish to alienate oneself from the presence of God as Father and, in the end, to die, it is important to consider a few points of importance.

Point of importance 1:

When God wipes the sponge over someone's past, when he is converted, the consequences of his past life are not automatically undone.

Jesus will help him to confront these responsibilities and to learn how to deal with them, through faith in Him, on the basis of his new look upon life.

In order to be completely freed from this past it may be necessary for him to forgive the people who have hurt him in the past. He will also have to confess his wrong behaviour to the people who have perhaps suffered as a result.

Point of importance 2:

Paul writes:

- *Therefore, my dear friends ... **continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling**, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose. Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, **children of God without fault** in a warped and crooked generation. (Philippians 2:12-15)*

With fear and trembling: is an expression that describes the fear of someone who realises that he/she is unable to satisfy every requirement completely, but **applies himself to do his level best** to carry out his task.

As Paul writes elsewhere:

- *Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I **press on** toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:14)*
- *I strike a blow to my body and **make it my slave** so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. (1 Corinthians 9:27)*

9 Study: Believing in Jesus Christ.

10 Study: Conversion and discipleship in the Old Testament.



This means exercise and consecration to God from an upright heart.

Point of importance 3:

Peter writes:

- ***Make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble. (2 Peter 1:10)***

And James:

- ***But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, **and continues in it**—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do. (James 1:25)***

Anyone who has reconciled himself to God as Father and who wants to do his level best to live as His child, will desire to make God's rules his own, by reading and studying the Bible – personally and in fellowship with others.

Point of importance 4.

God knows that a disciple of Jesus Christ is not perfect and will stumble in his life with Him.

Jesus has provided for this as well, however, in His sacrifice on the cross.

Anyone who admits that he has stumbled and who shows remorse, can know that he receives forgiveness for this, **through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.**

John expresses this as follows:

- ***If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)***

See also the studies:

- The law and the curse.¹¹
- Flesh and Spirit, curse and grace.¹²
- The priest in the order of Melchizedek.¹³

This is continued in the study 'Forgiveness – basic principles 2', concerning the relationship between a disciple and his neighbour.¹⁴

11 Study: The law and the curse.

12 Study: Flesh and Spirit, curse and grace.

13 Study: The priest in the order of Melchizedek.

14 Study: Forgiveness – basic principles 2.