

Luke 17:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

Analysis

Unlimited forgiveness: 'And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.' The repetition 'seven times in a day' (έπτάκις τῆς ἡμέρας, heptakis tēs hēmeras) indicates repeated offenses in a short period. Despite frequent failures, if the offender 'turn again to thee' (ἐπιστρέψῃ, epistrepse, turns back) 'saying, I repent' (λέγων, Μετανοῶ, legōn, Metanoō), 'thou shalt forgive him' (ἀφήσεις αὐτῷ, aphēseis autō). The future tense indicates obligation, not option. Seven represents completeness in Scripture—unlimited forgiveness is required. This doesn't mean enabling sin or refusing accountability but extending forgiveness whenever genuine repentance is expressed. Christians must mirror God's unlimited forgiveness toward them.

Historical Context

Peter later asked whether forgiving seven times was sufficient (Matthew 18:21), showing he thought this was generous. Jesus' response—seventy times seven—established that no limit exists for forgiveness (Matthew 18:22). This teaching contradicts natural human inclination toward vengeance or holding grudges. The parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:23-35) teaches that those who've been forgiven infinite debt by God must forgive others' comparatively small offenses. Refusal to forgive indicates one hasn't truly experienced God's forgiveness. The requirement that the offender says 'I repent' doesn't mean

holding unforgiveness until apology comes—we must have a forgiving spirit even if apology never arrives. But reconciliation requires both parties: our forgiveness and their repentance.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does understanding your own forgiveness by God motivate forgiving others who repeatedly offend you?
2. What's the difference between forgiving someone and being reconciled to them?
3. How do you balance unlimited forgiveness with appropriate boundaries against ongoing abuse or manipulation?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	έὰν	έπτάκις	τῆς	ἡμέρας	ἀμάρτη	εἰς	σὲ	καὶ
And	if	seven times	G3588	in a day	he trespass	against	thee	And
G2532	G1437	G2034		G2250	G264	G1519	G4571	G2532

έπτάκις	τῆς	ἡμέρας	έπιστρέψῃ	ἐπὶ	σὲ	λέγων,	Μετανοῶ
seven times	G3588	in a day	turn again	to	thee	saying	I repent
G2034		G2250	G1994	G1909	G4571	G3004	G3340

ἀφήσεις	αὐτῷ
thou shalt forgive	him
G863	G846

Additional Cross-References

Romans 12:20 (Parallel theme): Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Matthew 5:44 (Parallel theme): But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Matthew 6:12 (Parallel theme): And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Matthew 18:16 (Parallel theme): But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

Matthew 18:35 (Parallel theme): So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

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