

Mark 11:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Analysis

Jesus taught: 'But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses' (εἰ δὲ ὑμεῖς οὐκ ἀφίετε, οὐδὲ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς ἀφήσει τὰ παραπτώματα ὑμῶν). This follows teaching on faith and prayer (vv. 22-25). Jesus conditions God's forgiveness on our forgiving others. This doesn't mean we earn forgiveness by forgiving (salvation is by grace, not works). Rather, genuine reception of divine forgiveness transforms us into forgiving people. Unwillingness to forgive reveals we haven't truly grasped God's forgiveness. The parable of the unmerciful servant (Matthew 18:23-35) illustrates this principle—those forgiven enormous debt must forgive smaller debts. Unforgiving spirits indicate hardened hearts unregenerate by grace. True Christians, having received mercy, show mercy (Matthew 5:7; James 2:13). Forgiveness isn't optional add-on to Christianity but essential evidence of salvation.

Historical Context

Jewish prayer tradition (Amidah, 'Eighteen Benedictions') included petition for forgiveness. Jesus taught that prayers for forgiveness ring hollow when harboring unforgiveness toward others. The principle appears throughout Jesus' teaching: Lord's Prayer conditions forgiveness on forgiving others (Matthew 6:12, 14-15); Sermon on Mount teaches reconciliation before worship (Matthew 5:23-24). Early church practiced church discipline including forgiveness and reconciliation (Matthew 18:15-20; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11). Paul commanded forgiveness as Christ forgave (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13). Yet this raised questions: must

Christians forgive unrepentant offenders? How does this relate to justice? Reformed theology distinguishes judicial forgiveness (God's once-for-all pardon at justification) from paternal forgiveness (maintaining fellowship), while emphasizing that genuine believers exhibit forgiving spirits reflecting the grace they've received.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does the condition that God forgives only if we forgive others reveal the transformative nature of genuine salvation?
2. What's the relationship between forgiveness (showing mercy) and justice (pursuing accountability for wrong)?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	δὲ	ὑμεῖς	οὐκ	ἀφησεὶ	οὐδε	τὰ	πατὴρ	ὑμῶν	τὰ
if	But	ye	not	do	neither	which	Father	your	which
G1487	G1161	G5210	G3756	G863	G3761	G3588	G3962	G5216	G3588
ἐν	τὰ	οὐρανοῖς	ἀφησεὶ	τὰ	παραπτώματα	ὑμῶν			
is in	which	heaven	do	which	trespasses	your			
G1722	G3588	G3772	G863	G3588	G3900	G5216			

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org