

A Community Forgives

Key Verse: *"To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ."*
—II Corinthians 2:10

Selected Scripture:
II Corinthians
1:23-2:11

ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT scriptural principles to fully appreciate is the appropriateness of extending forgiveness to an erring brother or sister following their repentance. "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. 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."—Luke 17:3,4

The purpose of such rebukes spoken of by the Master in these verses is not to humiliate the offender or to cast him aside forever. Rather, it is to bring about the desired repentance of the individual with the hope of restoring such a one to fellowship with the Lord and his brethren.

In this lesson, Paul writes to the brethren in Corinth explaining that his intended visit to see them did not come about because he did not wish to cause them sorrow by rebuking them for previously tolerating some serious misconduct in their midst. His desire was that the brethren would receive this letter not with a view to cause them pain, but instead that it should be viewed as evidence that the sincere standard

of righteousness should prevail in all of their actions.—
II Cor. 2:1-4

Paul continues: “If any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.” (vss. 5,6) The believers at Corinth apparently had excommunicated the offender from their assembly. Having done this, however, Paul also reminds the brethren concerning the requirement of restoring the one to fellowship following his contrition of heart and repentance.—vss. 7-9

In our Key Verse, Paul wanted the Corinthian brethren to know that because of their obedience to the scriptural requirements in this matter, he now is thoroughly in harmony with them. If there was anything necessary for him to forgive, for their sakes and in accordance with how Christ would view the matter, he has done so.

Satan is ever ready to ensnare believers with his cunning devices. In a situation such as has been described, he would welcome having the brethren tolerate sin in their congregation. If failing to accomplish this, the Adversary would be content to overwhelm the repentant sinner by unmeasured sorrow if not restored to fellowship. Let us ever be mindful to resist these snares of the devil.—I Pet. 5:8

Prior to his conversion on the road to Damascus, as Saul of Tarsus, the apostle was guilty of persecuting the followers of Christ even though he thought he was doing God’s will. As such, he could appreciate the bestowal of the Father’s mercy and forgiveness after acknowledging the wrong that he did.—I Cor. 15:9

Given our own weaknesses and imperfections, we should be grateful that our merciful Heavenly Father is patient with us as long as we continue to focus upon obedience to his will. Our own forgiveness by God is contingent upon our doing likewise to those who trespass against us.—Matt. 6:14,15 ■