“Forgive Me” with Anthony Evans

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YzhzCc7ofTU>

“How He Loves Us” with Anthony Evans

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OjkshFIfz5g>

“Healer” with Anthony Evans

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8fcT7FQPAls>

“Could It Be” with Anthony Evans

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0YHahp8irs>

“Never Letting Go of You” with Anthony Evans

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPVZl8bALWE>

“Mighty to Save” with Anthony Evans

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rksm5G8M4k>

“Restore Me” with Anthony Evans

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDIVDBqxk_s>

“Here I Am to Worship” with Anthony Evans

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=356XIw65BQQ>

“Never Runs Dry” with Casey J

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-9W-snQhOU>

“Your Heart” with Casey J

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91TbwiSZkRM>

“A Heart That Forgives” with Kevin Levar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=indCvnD4Ji4>

“Atmosphere of Faith” with Kevin Levar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81EDu5enK8M>

“Let’s Come Together” with Kevin LeVar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SH_t2OiiVo>

**Forgiving Seventy Times Seven as God Does**

***Matthew 18:15-35; Proverbs 24:16; Daniel 9***

 What is forgiveness?

I think that most modern definitions of forgiveness focus on being able to forgive so that we can move on with our lives. In one popular phrase, lack of forgiveness is wishing harm to another person who has wronged us and then us drinking the poison we meant for them. In another popular phrase, forgiveness is being able to accept an apology that hasn’t been given to us. Forgiveness is basically about making ourselves whole after a wrong has been done to us.

There is truth to that. The Bible promises that God will not forgive us of our sins if we do not forgive others of their sins. In our *Matthew 18* passage today, Jesus told a parable about a master who was upset with an unforgiving servant whom he had earlier forgiven of a greater debt. *[H]is lord was wroth, and delivered him to his tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. 35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses, Matthew 18:34b-35.* So, at the very least, yes, forgiveness is about us.

But forgiveness is about so much more. Forgiveness is about seeking the wholeness of the person who offended you. In the same *Matthew 18* passage, Peter asked Jesus, *“Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?” Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but, Until seventy times seven, Matthew 21b-22.*

I believe that both Peter and Jesus were making references to how much we should forgive in terms of how God forgave others. Peter probably had some notion that seven times was God’s limit to forgiveness the same way that *Proverbs 24:16* said that *a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again; but the wicked shall fall into mischief.*

Jesus answered Peter with another notion of how God forgave others. Jesus said that we should forgive, not seven times, but, until seventy times seven. Jesus, I believe, made a direct reference to when Daniel asked about his people’s future, and God prophesied seventy weeks (70 times 7) for God’s people. Through the angel Gabriel, God said that *[s]eventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy, Daniel 9:24.*

Note Jesus’ polyvalent play on words about how we should forgive as God forgave. First, to forgive seventy and seven times is to forgive 490 times, a huge, intractable number.

Also, to forgive seventy times seven can also mean to forgive until these seventy weeks have been fulfilled. According to many scholarly interpretations, there were 7 weeks of years (49) until the rebuilding of the temple, 62 weeks of years until the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, and then a cutting off of the weeks of years until Jesus’ return. Here is the rest of the text of God’s words about these seventy weeks:

The angel Gabriel said, *“25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.*

*26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.*

*27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate,” Daniel 9:25-27.*

Here is one graphical depiction of these seventy weeks:



See Dr. David Reagan’s “Daniel’s 70 Weeks of Years” <http://christinprophecy.org/articles/daniels-70-weeks-of-years/>.

 So, in this sense, forgiving our brother seventy times seven is forgiving until the Second Coming of Jesus.

 But forgiving seventy times seven as God did is also about the nature of God’s forgiveness. Daniel came to God for forgiveness when Daniel interpreted the scriptures and prophecies to learn that his people would be in captivity for 70 years. In the first year of King Darius’ reign, Daniel said, *“I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. 3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: 4 And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;….16 O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us, Daniel 9:2-4,16.”*

 God’s forgiveness was first to pour amazing love on Daniel. God sent the angel Gabriel with God’s response. Daniel said, *“Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. 22 And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. 23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved:” Daniel 9:21-23a.*

Then, in this amazing love, God explained that these seventy years of captivity were part of a larger plan of seventy weeks where God was seeking the wholeness of God’s people. God wanted God’s people to be free from sin. God wanted to *finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, Daniel 9:24.*

God doesn’t just look down on us and forgive us so that God can move on with God’s business. God forgives us because God has compassion on us and wants to see us become whole. The gift of forgiveness is a gift of love. In God’s love for us there are enough resources for us to love those who hurt us and owe us. In Jesus’ parable, the fictional lord asked the unforgiving servant, *“Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?” Matthew 18:33.*

 The idea for this Bible Study came as I was daydreaming during Rev. Kadesha Carroll’s Heart Ministry Radio Purpose Broadcast. She made a reference this verse, and I began to think about it very specifically. The larger part of Kadesha’s three week series is about being unselfish. And that is how Peter and Jesus’ conversation started.

 Peter asked Jesus about unforgiveness when Jesus talked about the awesome opportunity of two or three gathering together in Jesus’ name. Jesus said *“That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,” Matthew 18:19-20.*

 There are some awesome opportunities out there for those of us who receive God’s love, forgive others with the prayer that they become whole, and come together to ask God for new things. What a wonderful world this could be! What a wonderful impact we would have on our brother and sisters who have wronged us and wronged others! What a wonderful relationship we could have with God in prayer!

 O, how God loves us!

Tobias Pinckney, Powered to Witness University, 8/6/16

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