

Is God's forgiveness unconditional? His love certainly is, as is showcased in Romans 5:8 where Paul writes, "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Christ's sacrificial death was not made for a sanctified people, but for a hopelessly deprived people. In Jesus' encounter with the rich young ruler in Mark 10, Jesus looked at this young man, and first "loved him" (v.21) and then revealed the sin in this man's heart. Christ's love for his creation is unconditional and poured out on people, even while they live in sin. His forgiveness, however, comes with one single sobering condition.

When Jesus teaches his disciples about prayer he introduces what has become known as the Lord's Prayer. In Matthew 6:12 we read, "and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." The plea for forgiveness is made after we ourselves have forgiven those to whom we have offended. To erase all doubt that this is the case Jesus adds "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (v.14-15). As C.S. Lewis observes, "There is no slightest suggestion that we are offered forgiveness on any other terms."

Further affirmation of this idea is found in the beatitude "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy," (Mt. 5:7), and most strikingly in the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:21-35. In this parable we find, not simply that forgiveness is not offered, but that it is actually rescinded, and the offending servant condemned in accordance with his previous debt.

When I first encountered this idea in C.S. Lewis' book *Mere Christianity*, I have to admit that I pushed back against the idea. How could there be any limitation to God's forgiveness? This is where we find that there is a difference between a limitation and a condition. While Christ's sacrifice on the cross can cover the collective sin of all mankind, his forgiveness is not offered to an unrepentant and bitter heart. In each of our lives, if we hold a grudge or despise a person for how their actions have negatively affected us, or seek revenge, however subtle, against an offending brother or sister or enemy, we withhold from ourselves the forgiveness of God. This heart of forgiveness towards others is something that we ought to pray diligently for.

Moving on to Alumni business, the 2023 Alumni Weekend is less than a month away! On behalf of the Alumni Executive I can say that we are very excited for this year's weekend and look forward to seeing and connecting with as many alumni as can make it. Please register today on the website (or call the College if online registration is not possible for you), and we'll see you there!

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