

## Short Answer Series # 23

# Who can forgive my sins?

'When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, your sins are forgiven you. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why does this Man speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?' Mark 2v5-7.

What they thought was true, but, they didn't recognise that was God standing before them clothed in flesh. '...God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.' 2 Corinthians 5v19. Jesus was either Almighty God (Isaiah 9v6), or, a poached egg, (as C. S. Lewis put it), He had to be one or the other to say He forgave someone's sins, when only God can forgive sins.

'Whoever's sins you remit, they are remitted unto them; and whoever's sins you retain, they are retained.' John 20v23. The Lord was not telling us, we have the power to pardon, or condemn anyone, as Catholicism has wrongly mis-interpreted this verse. He was merely saying, that we as believers, can discern, and declare, that a person is forgiven, or not, by their response to the Gospel. Telling an unconverted person their sins are forgiven, would be a lie.

There are some areas where we do have a part to play in forgiveness. The Lord gave the earth into the hands of mankind, (psalm 115v16), and He gave us the authority to form responsible governments, and make laws for the sake of order. As the Lord said, 'Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's,' Matthew 22v21.

If we break Caesar's laws, we need to make those things right with Caesar, because, we did not sin against the Lord, but against the Civil Authorities.

If a married person commits adultery, they did not sin against God, but against their husband or wife, the one who they vowed to remain faithful to all their lives. So, they need to make that right with their spouse, before the Lord can forgive them for it.

'Then came Peter to Him, and said, Lord how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?' (Matthew 18v21.) When someone does something wrong to us, it is between us and them, before it is between us and the Lord. That person forgives us for what we did wrong; the Lord forgives us for our wrong attitude, that caused our action.

Unforgiveness on our part is a sin, but, to forgive, we do need to put the blame where it belongs.

If an Asian, (for example,) does something wrong to me, and I hate every Asian because of it, that is wrong. We have to put the blame on the individual who committed the offense, before it can be dealt with.

If a woman, (for example,) has something wrong done to her by a man, and she hates all men because of it, that is wrong. She cannot blame all men for one man's sins.

If anyone says they cannot call God their Father, because of something their father did to them, that is wrong. No-one can blame our Heavenly Father, for something an earthly father did. We cannot right anything, when we put the blame for it in the wrong place. Judge righteous judgement.

If we harbour unforgiveness in any way in our lives, we can never be right with the Lord, and Eternity does depend on us being absolutely right with Him.

'For if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.' (Matthew 6v1415.)