

Welcome to: - Bible House of Grace.



God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Romans 12.

(2013)

The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man. As to such I neither claim special knowledge or perfect understanding.

If you think items presented on this site to be in error, please let me know and I will gladly reconsider the content.

Romans 12.

Topics.

- Be not conformed to this world, but transformed by renewal of your mind.
- Present your bodies as a living sacrifice.
- Be transformed by the renewal of your mind.
- Think according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.
- Serve with zeal, generosity mercy and cheerfulness.
- Love one another with brotherly affection and show each other honour.
- Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.
- Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
- Forgiveness repentance and trust.

The Previous Chapter: in the previous chapter Paul spoke about the gifts and the calling of God being irrevocable, Gentile branches being taken from a wild tree and grafted into a Jewish cultivated tree, Israel's full inclusion into God's Kingdom and a deliverer coming from Zion. The chapter ended with Paul saying who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?" from Him and through Him and to Him are all things to God be glory forever. Amen.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

Be not conformed to this world, but Transformed by Renewal of your Mind.

Romans 12:1-3 ----- ¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. ³For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

- Remember this is a letter Paul is writing to the Christian brothers in Rome.

Discern: (prove in KJV) means to test and examine so that it is proved acceptable.

Mind: refers to the intellect in thought, perception, understanding, feeling or will.

Present your bodies as a Living Sacrifice.

It is interesting to notice how Paul describes worship (i.e., living a life that honours the name of God and the name of Christ) which means if we stand in a congregation singing praises with our hands raised in worship, but are living a life that is corrupt our worship will mean nothing to God since according to Paul worship begins with lifestyle.

No-doubt this is why Paul refers to worship as a living sacrifice since the list of things to be denied is endless some of which would be: human selfishness, pride, lust, greed, anger, coveting, the craving for revenge, gossip, unlawful sex, our self-centredness (manifested in our desires for more than we need), our excessive avariciousness toward materialism, our overeating of tasty foods the craving to be

important or esteemed, our sensual and lustful thoughts, the desire to be rich and have abundantly more than we need. Our self-interest, and lack of willingness to give to those less fortunate and those in need, our degrading, resentful, bitter or jealous thoughts of others and any other attitude, thought or action that is contrary to the law of love and the Holiness of God. Is it any wonder the LORD calls us to walk in love, since love does no harm and therefore no-one acting from love needs a list of do's and don'ts.

Be Transformed by the Renewal of your Mind.

Paul's words, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (v2) are in the context of pride, i.e., thinking of ourselves more highly than we should and feeling superior to others contrasted to being humble.

Renewing of the mind in this context is not about learning everything about the Bible that we can, but rather the focus is on pride, being conformed to this world means esteeming and thinking highly of ourselves because of our talents, wealth, material possessions or our abilities and knowledge, Paul is calling brothers and sisters in Christ to form another standard of judging themselves which is of course judging ourselves is by our Christian character contrasted to judging ourselves according to our rank of importance or wealth and possessions or eloquence in speaking or by our talents and abilities.

We should not esteem ourselves by the usual standard of the world but by our own Christian character since one of the greatest dangers for us all (especially those who are successful) is prideful and extravagant self-valuation. Paul is cautioning those in Christ not to judge themselves on those things that have no intrinsic value; (i.e., rank, titles, external accomplishments, talents, learning or wealth), but rather on our standard of character (i.e., are we kind, gracious, forgiving, merciful etc.). Being conformed to this world means esteeming ourselves because of our success, rank and skill whether we are in the world or in the church, while not being conformed to this word is about judging ourselves according to the fruits of the Spirit we manifest toward others.

Test everything to discern what the Will of God Is.

The call to, "Test everything so we are able to discern what is the will of God, what is good and what is acceptable and perfect" (v2) means examine a thing to see if it would honour God and bring a good testimony to the name of Christ or whether it would dishonour and offend them. Test everything carries the following two ideas: -

1. Examine if we are living a lifestyle that honours God, brings a good testimony to ourselves, the Lord Jesus Christ and to the Christian faith.
2. Examine if we are doing everything from a spirit of love since this is the will of God for every circumstance.

Discerning the will of God in any given circumstance means discerning how to treat a situation with love contrasted to treating it by the letter of the law and being dogmatic and legalistic. This is because in life many situations that arise are not black and white, but have many shades of grey in these circumstances the acceptable and perfect will of God is to do all things from love.

John wrote: -

- Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love (1 John 4:8).
- God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (1 John 4:16)

These verses shine a spotlight on the truth that the acceptable and perfect will of God is to do all things from love. A good starting point to find the will of God is to ask ourselves the following three questions: -

1. In these circumstances what is the loving thing to do?

2. What can I do that will help everyone involved?
3. What would be the best action I can take that will benefit the people in this difficult and mixed up situation?

To think soberly: carries the idea of being clear-headed and giving any situation serious, thoughtful unselfish, compassionate, helpful and kind-hearted consideration. In some versions the words, "To think soberly, according as God has dealt to everyone the measure of faith" are rendered "The faith in measure" and "The measure of grace." Paul in his letter to the Ephesians states, "Grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Eph. 4:7), based on these verses to think soberly carries the following two ideas: -

1. Estimating ourselves wisely, prudently, modestly and humbly contrasted to those who over-estimate themselves and are proud, haughty and foolish in their manner and behaviour.
2. Being mindful that the gifts, abilities, light, and knowledge etc., that we possess have been dealt out, divided, and parted to us from God and that we should never get puffed up in pride, but think of ourselves according to the measure of our faith.

Think according to the measure of faith that God has assigned: these words are highlighting the truth that the source of the faith that each Christian has is God, He is the giver of this measure of faith. One of the most effectual promoters of humility and right feeling is to understand that God is the giver of faith. This is because people commonly regard the objects on which they pride themselves as things of their own creation, or as depending on themselves, but once an object is regarded as a gift of God it not only ceases to arouse pride, but also changes the feeling into gratitude. As long as we regard God as the source of all blessings we will remain humble.

To think each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned, means that we are not to be elated in our view of ourselves; we are not to esteem ourselves by wealth, or talent, or learning, but by our attachment to God and by the influence of faith on our minds meaning we are to evaluate ourselves by our devoutness, virtue, goodness, faithfulness and godliness for the following three reasons: -

1. Our talent, learning, rank, or wealth, is a very improper rule by which to estimate ourselves because the worst as well as the best people may possess them.
2. God will judge us in the Day of Judgment by our attachment and faithfulness to Christ and by how we have treated others (the true standard by which to estimate ourselves) (Matt 25).
3. Knowing that God has given all that we have and being consciousness of our own imperfections and short-comings in the Christian faith will promote humbleness of mind and bring down our usual inordinate self-estimation. There is nothing else that will secure and promote humility as much as these two facts. All other things may produce or promote pride, but being mindful that God has given all that we have and being aware of our own imperfections and short-comings will effectually secure humility.

In the One Body we have many Members.

Romans 12:4-8 ----- ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

When Paul said, "For as in one body we have many members" he did not have in mind a single church in one local area, Paul was thinking globally, remember at this time there were no denominations, just home churches mushrooming up in every

nation, country and land. This means not all gifts are necessarily available in one local church (if they are they are greatly blessed), but, within the global body of Christ these gifts will be found and should be recognised by all who are trusting in Christ for their salvation and faithfully devoted to the Lord since we are a global family.

In my forty-five years of Christianity it seems (to me at least) that amongst those who are zealous for the Lord Jesus Christ there are generally six different personalities within the global family of Christ (naturally there are always exceptions and a mixture of each of the six), but as a general overview I have listed three of these on the positive side since they all have a good influence upon the body of Christ. They are not listed, in any order of importance since the perfect ideal would be to have all three flowing in every Christians life and every Christian church, but since we are not living in a perfect world nor do we have perfect minds, perfect understanding or perfect love this maybe a little idealistic. I have listed the other three on the negative side since they tend to bring people into bondage and an oppressive servitude.

The three personalities I have listed on the positive side are: -

1. Those who have a great grasp on intellectual Bible knowledge.
2. Those who flourish in helping the poor.
3. Those who have an amazing understanding of God's abundant grace.

The three personalities I have listed on the negative side are: -

1. Those who are dogmatic and legalistic (they lack compassion mercy and grace).
2. Those who are separatist (they isolate themselves from others in the body)
3. Those who believe they are the only ones who have the truth and preach against all others.

The imperfectness of the Lord's global family: it should always be kept in mind that within Christianity no single religious organisation is perfect there is within each religious institution or denomination a mixture (to a lesser or greater degree) of the positive and the negative. It seems Paul is saying we should in love and grace listen to all, but be discerning of each and take what is good and acceptable to God and reject what is not.

This does not mean we cast out those who are faithfully following Christ simply because we disagree with certain teachings, since whoever is trusting in Christ and faithfully following him (howbeit flawed) are still considered by Christ to be a brother or sister of his family. Since no-one stands before the Lord free of sinful dysfunctions and aberrations and none of us are free of sin, and God showed his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8) and now we love him he calls us his friend and his brother and sister. This means that just because we may not agree with a brother or sister of the Lord does not always mean that the Lord himself is not in fellowship with them.

Certainly we all have to agree on the message of the cross and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that leads to salvation and eternal life, but like a natural earthly family who though bonded in love, don't agree on all things they are cemented together by their common family bond.

Understanding that: the Bible was written in an entirely different culture to ours and the body of Christ is a global family filled with people from different nations, countries, cultures, backgrounds, knowledge, different levels of education (especially religious), it is filled with, broken families, people with all sorts of deep hurts and troubled pasts and baggage only God knows about so there is always going to be a certain amount of Scripture we will all understand differently. Because of this it should always be kept in mind that no-one has to be a walking Bible encyclopaedia to be in union with God and in the family of Christ and saved to eternal life and that the global church of God on earth is not opulent majestic

buildings, but people who are devoted and faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ made up of the world-wide collective group of Jews and Gentiles who belong to the Lord amongst all nations of the world. The church in this present age is an invisible spiritual Kingdom existing now in the heart and mind of all who belong to Christ in every nation of the world. It is outwardly manifested by those who live a lifestyle that honours God and brings a good testimony to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and collectively by the faithful global church. This present spiritual invisible Kingdom existing at this time in the hearts and minds of the faithful who love Christ will be literally manifested on earth to all the world when Christ returns in glory (Luke 13:28-29).

For further information concerning the global church, see the title: -

- Church (The Definitions of a Church) in, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Testing if a thing is the will of God: the easy way to test if a thing is in the will of God is to stand it up in front of love, by asking ourselves, "Is what I am doing benefiting this person's life, in harmony with the law of justice, and does it reflect, what Jesus would do. It is asking ourselves if we are operating from a legalistic heart or one that cares about the well-being of the people involved in any given circumstance or situation. Standing up in front of love is keeping in the forefront of our mind the following most glorious and majestic words of the Bible, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). This shines a spotlight on the truth that everything those in Christ do should be from a heart of love and an attitude that desires the best for others and justice for all.

Different measures of faith and gifts of the Spirit: refers to the gifts of the Spirit, the greatest of these is eternal life in in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:23), but Paul in the book of Corinthians tells us God has also appointed in in the global body of Christ each with their own gift, one of one kind and one of another since there are varieties of gifts and a variety of services, activities, helps, administration, but it is the same Lord and the same God who empowers the manifestation of the Spirit in all for the common good.

To one is given the utterance of wisdom to another the utterance of knowledge, to another faith, to another gifts of healing, to another the working of miracles to another prophecy to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another the power to speak in languages they have not learned, but others understand, to another the ability to interpret languages, but all these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills since not all are apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles or able to heal the sick neither do all speak in languages they have not learned nor is everyone able to interpret them (1 Corinthians 12).

- The gift that supersedes and surpasses all these gifts is love (1 Cor. 13:13).

It was never designed that all Christians should be equal in gifts, talents and skills rather God has designed that people should have different endowments, even within the secular world this reality is manifested in fact there never has been a state of perfect equality in anything; and it would be impossible to preserve society if there was. In this God exercises His sovereignty and bestows his favours as He pleases injuring no-one by granting gifts, talents and skills on others and holding each one of us responsible for the right use of what we have and not for what may be awarded to our neighbour.

According to the Grace: (gifts, skills and talents), within the local and global body of Christ there are multitudes of brothers and sisters who all have different gifts, skills and various talents, some will have gifts of: -

Service: these are able to offer assistance and support that helps extend the Kingdom of God.

Teachers; these have great knowledge and a natural ability to speak in a way that attracts people to listen to them with intense interest.

Encouragers: the natural focus in life of these people is to comfort, inspire and raise the spirits of others making that person feel better within themselves.

Generosity: these look for others they can help in anyway, it maybe financially, offering labour, counsel or simply their time.

Leaders: they have a confidence, humbleness, and genuine passion, to extend God's Kingdom and inspire others to willingly support and follow their vision.

Compassion: these have overwhelming mercy and longsuffering patience to support those who appear to everyone else to be undeserving of it.

According to grace: (v6) refer to God's favour and mercy that is bestowed on us, knowing that all we have is a matter of grace should keep us from pride and make us willing to occupy our appropriate place in the body of Christ. True honour consists not in splendid endowments or great wealth and function, but in rightly discharging the duties which God requires of us in our appropriate sphere. If all people held their talents as the gift of God and occupied in society the place for which God designed them much of the uneasiness, the restlessness, the ambition, and misery of the world would be prevented.

Prophecy: properly means to predict future events, but it also means to declare the divine will; to interpret the purposes of God; or to make known in any way the truth of God, which is designed to influence people. Though its first meaning is to predict or foretell future events the word prophecy is not limited to this meaning since those who did prophecy were messengers of God, and as they commonly proclaimed such predictions, instructions, and exhortations in regard to the sins, dangers and duties of people the word prophecy came to denote any who warned, threatened or in any way communicated the will of God.

Today the word prophecy refers to proclaiming the messages of the Bible, since what we have in written form today is the prophetic inspired word of God.

During the generations of Paul the Scriptures were not neatly put together as we have them in the Canon of the Bible today, added to this their message was totally new so the people had to rely on others receiving visions and prophecies, but today we have all those spoken prophecies recorded in the pages of the Bible, therefore when a person is proclaiming God's word and the words of the Lord and the apostles they are proclaiming the prophetic word of God.

This is why we do not need any more knowledge beyond what is recorded in the Bible since it has recorded within its pages God's eternal plans, purposes, will and eternal outcome for all mankind. Today whoever proclaims the word of God is proclaiming prophecy because it is the inspired word of God.

Serve with zeal, generosity mercy and cheerfulness: (v7-8) one of the greatest vulnerabilities in the body of Christ is pride. Pride is a sin in us by nature thus we all need to be cautioned and armed against it since there is always an ever present danger that we become proud of our talents and then adopt a pretence of humility and self-denial and begin to serve ourselves rather than being enthusiastic, passionate and fervent for the Lord and laying out our lives in generosity and mercy for the good of others.

One Spirit and one body: all who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ make up one body in Christ who is the Head of the body, and the common centre of our unity. In the spiritual body some are fitted for and called to one sort of work and others for another sort of work. We are all called to do-good were we can, one to another and for the common benefit of all.

We should never be backward in laying out ourselves for the good of others neither should we think we are nothing and therefore feel it is OK to sit still and do nothing, rather we should think, though I am nothing in myself nevertheless I will lay myself out to the utmost in the strength and the grace of Christ whenever I am able. Whatever our gifts or situations maybe we should always try to employ ourselves humbly, diligently, cheerfully, and in simplicity; not seeking our own credit or profit, but the good of many (i.e., our spiritual family and for those of the world).

Love one another with Brotherly Affection and Show each other Honour.

Romans 12:9-18 ----- ⁹Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honour. ¹¹Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. ¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be conceited. ¹⁷Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Affection: means having a caring and warm fondness toward another it carries the idea of friendly attachment (like natural biological family members).

Brotherly: carries the idea of friendly affection and brotherly love. During the ancient Roman era woman (especially those who had authority) were referred to as brothers by the Roman Empire. the Jewish nation viewed a Jewish man or woman as a brother this is because it was an ancient expression that signified a person belonged to the same nation, the same family, the same faith, or the same group of people etc. during the Roman and New Testament era the word, brothers was not used to differentiate between male and females unless the context specifically states it. Brothers was a perfect expression for those in Christ since, brotherly love is love that protects, defends, guards and shelters and is free from any romantic thought.

Fervent: carries the idea of being eager, earnest, impassioned, zealous and having an enthusiastic spirit.

Paul is basically saying brothers and sisters in Christ should endeavour to do the following three things: -

1. Do whatever they can to enhance their brother and sisters life and the life of those outside the body of Christ.
2. Live a lifestyle that brings honour to God and to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian faith.
3. Patiently endure in faith the hardship and troubles of life until the Lord returns.

The life of those who belong to the family of God can be summed up in the words of Jesus himself when he commanded us to, "Love our neighbour as ourself" (Matt. 22:37-39) (Mark 12:28-31) meaning do not deliberately do harm to other humans, James calls this the Royal law (James 2:8). No sane person deliberately does things to inflict pain on themselves, loving others as you love yourself is not about feeling some warm and fuzzy emotion towards others, it is about not hurting others as you would not hurt yourself. The thing God hates the most is when we do harm to another person, physically, financially, sexually, verbally, emotionally or spiritually and the thing God loves the most is when we do good to others.

Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the LORD.

Romans 12:19-21 --- ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

The words, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord" (v19) are cited from the song of Moses in which the LORD says He will vindicate His people (Deut. 32:35-36). Vengeance is not about seeking justice, but rather carries the idea of craving revenge and wishing harm upon another it is about what the world today calls, payback. Vengeance leads to resentment, bitterness, hatred and the craving for revenge, which will rob a person of joy and can lead to destructive behaviour and

even murder. This is the reason God tells us to rest in the comfort that the LORD will repay evil doers and will vindicate the victims of them. Nevertheless that does not mean a victim of a crime shouldn't seek justice since vengeance is about taking the law into one's own hands, while justice is not only about seeking what is fair and right through the proper channel, but also protecting the innocent of further harm by the perpetrator of the crime.

Do Good to your Enemy and you will Heap Burning Coals their Head.

Since the words, "By so doing you will heap burning coals on his head" (v20) are in the context of craving vengeance Paul is not saying we should deny justice for the innocent by right and lawful means neither is it about, self-defence or protecting another human from harm. Certainly burning coals is expressive of intense agony, but the pain is not about calling down divine vengeance on a person, but of the natural effect of showing kindness.

Paul is saying that the effect of doing good to an enemy would be to produce pain that results from shame and remorse of conscience because of a conviction of the wickedness of their conduct. Paul knowing, "It is God's kindness that leads people to repentance" (Rom. 2:4) is saying the way for us to bring a person to repentance is to do them good. People cannot resist goodness it will eventually find its way to the heart and the conscience and those who are guilty are overwhelmed at the hurt their wickedness has brought about.

If people acted on this principal of repaying evil with good' much of the suffering amongst individuals, churches and nations would be prevented. As bad as human nature is it is enormously difficult for the conscience and heart of a person who is overwhelmed with kindness to remain unrepentant of their wickedness and the hurt they have caused those showing them only goodness.

If Christians and nations responded to unkindness with kindness, malice with benevolence, and wrong with right, much of the troubles we experience in our Christian communities and the world would be avoided. Kindness is the means of bringing about a sense of guilt in the conscience of our enemies since responding in goodness shines a floodlight on the injustice and magnifies the wickedness not only to the guilty, but also to everyone watching.

Thus the concept of heaping coals of fire upon the head of the enemy is intended to produce sorrow and repentance on the consciousness of the enemy. Showing kindness to an enemy, rather than taking revenge is totally contrary to the dictates of our corrupted human nature, but whoever does show kindness to an enemy will, heap coals of fire on their head and by kindness make them feel the wrong they have done and in this way subdue their enemy.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good: (v21) these words are the absolute opposite of what our natural fallen nature wants to do to those who have wounded us, rather the hearts craving is to inflict pain and harm on those who hurt us, but the anger that drives us for revenge and the bitterness, resentment and hatred that floods our hearts as a result of wanting payback will destroy us emotionally and spiritually.

The only freedom is forgiveness which is such an enormously difficult thing to do when one has been badly wounded, abused or hurt and goes against what every thought and emotion in us wants to do. Since forgiveness is such an important topic I have included it in the following article as a topic on its own.

NOTE.

The concept of heaping coals of fire upon the head of the enemy does not mean that we throw away justice since justice is one of the great pillars of God's throne. Heaping coals of fire upon the head of the enemy is about our response to our hurt and our response to them it is about responding from the Spirit of Christ or responding from a spirit of revenge, hatred, anger, bitterness and the desire to inflict the same hurt upon our enemy.

Forgiveness.

Jesus said if a brother or sister repents meaning if they feel guilt, remorse, shame and contrition forgive them and lay aside any sense of anger, revenge or bitterness that you may have toward them. Those that belong to Christ are to always be inwardly ready to forgive, but the healing of a broken relationship cannot take place until the guilty repents.

Jesus forgiveness is always available to everyone, but a sinner does not experience it until they repent toward God. Forgiveness is not something the believer turns off and on it is a constant attitude or willingness to be always ready to forgive. Having a heart that is in a constant mode of forgiveness is enormously powerful it is what stops people harbouring the destructive attitudes of resentment and bitterness, added to this God's Spirit abundantly dwells in a heart that is full of forgiveness, compassion and mercy, but flees from one the is engulfed in hatred, bitterness and resentment.

Forgiveness sets a person Free.

Jesus told the twelve, if they do not forgive, neither will their Father which is in heaven forgive them their trespasses (Mark 11:25-26) it is absolutely imperative to forgive. Notice Jesus does not add, "Providing they repent" this forgiveness is independent of the other person's response, for the following three reasons: -

1. God freely grants to everyone in Christ forgiveness and righteousness every-day. Everyone who has eternal life is totally indebted to God, simply because without the righteousness that God grants to them because of their faith in Christ none of us would be counted worthy, added to this there is nothing we can do to repay God for the life of His Son or repay Christ for his suffering.
2. God wants to set us free from the mental torment that comes with unforgiveness, but he can only do it when we forgive. If we do not forgive whoever offends us bitterness, hatred and a craving for revenge (i.e. to see the other person suffer) will take hold of our hearts and fill it with every other destructive attitude and in extreme cases even murder.
3. As long as we remain in unforgiveness we continue to allow the person we are not forgiving to have control over our thoughts and our hearts and that will hurt us mentally and emotionally and rob us spiritually. The Spirit of God (i.e. joy, peace and contentment cannot dwell in a human heart that is filled with bitterness, the lust for revenge and hatred). Forgiveness keeps our hearts free from all these destructive attitudes such is its tremendous healing power.

Forgiveness and Repentance.

Jesus heart is always open and ready to forgive whoever comes to him in repentance, his heart is continually overflowing with forgiveness, but only those who come to him in repentance enter the family of God. The following verses show that it is a Bible principle, that before forgiveness can be received a person must acknowledge (confess) their wrongdoing. God in the Old Testament said: -

- If Israel confesses their iniquity that they committed against me and if their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, with Isaac and with Abraham, and I will remember the land (meaning bless it) (Lev 26:40-42).

David when speaking of himself in Psalms says: -

- I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin (Psalm 32:5).

And in the New Testament the apostle John says: -

- If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Added to what God, David and John say God's forgiveness though permanently available to everyone through Jesus is only realised and experienced when a sinner comes to Christ in honest repentance and sorrow. If a person does not acknowledge their wrong doing how can they possibly be sorry for the hurt they have caused? Even more how can they put right something they don't acknowledge is wrong, thus God's forgiveness is always available, forever flowing, but confessing ones wrong actions is required before it can be received and experienced in the heart and before we can be reconciled to God.

In some cases when possible restitution may be required to help repair the hurt caused to others. True repentance would automatically bring about this desire in the heart. Restitution in most cases may simply be saying sorry to the person offended or to God.

An amazing testimony: I remember listening to the testimony of a woman sharing how a man had thrown a bucket of hydrochloric acid into her face, her entire face was grossly scared and deformed (it still is). She said, "I made the choice to forgive, because I was not going to allow my grandchildren to grow up knowing a grandmother full of bitterness, hurt and resentment. What a tremendous influence of good and strength this grandmother would have imparted to her grandchildren. It is certainly true that to make such a choice takes an enormous amount of fortitude and strength of character, but it is also true that there is no personal value or benefit in holding onto resentment and anger?

Forgiveness and Trust.

Now trust is a totally different thing to forgiveness, a person may forgive another but that does not always mean that they will become a bosom friend or even have contact with the person who is forgiven, in many cases that would be foolishness.

The woman who had the acid thrown in her face or a girl who has been raped will have to forgive to set their own heart free from the hurt and bitterness and everything that stems from it, but they would be foolish to have immediate contact with the men who had so cruelly abused them until they had proven their honest heartfelt remorse and done whatever is needed to heal the deep wound they have inflicted on their innocent victims and proven they can be trusted.

Forgiveness is never easy because it always involves forgiving someone who has hurt or offended us, to overcome the reluctance to forgive it is helpful to look at Jesus who though we were sinners against God was prepared to be cruelly nailed to the cross, and even more while in tremendous suffering he prayed: -

- Father forgive them for they know not what they do (Luke 23:32-34).

There is no malice in the heart of Christ only love and if we are to have a deeper relationship with God we cannot do it with malice in our hearts. Take the hurt and pain to the throne of God and before the bloodstained cross and forgive and embrace the eternal love and grace of God who showed his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).

End.