

Come to Understanding

**They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding,
and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. — Isaiah 29:24**

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If You Forgive

Many of us read and recite the Scripture that has become known as “the Lord’s prayer.” The well-known prayer from the traditional King James Version reads as follows:

- 9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
- 10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven.
- 11 Give us this day our daily bread.
- 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
- 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. -Matthew 6

The prayer begins with emphasis upon the holiness of the name of the Father, which is Yahweh, and it ends with lifting Him up by proclaiming His everlasting kingdom, power, and glory.

However, as we read this prayer, we often stop reading before we see that Yahshua (Jesus) singles out a portion of it for repeating and clarifying. He revisits the part of the prayer on forgiveness in which He tells us to ask the Father to forgive us from our debts just as we forgive others for the debts that they owe to us!

- 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. -Matthew 6

He seems to be making a strong and important point of emphasis as He continues with what for many of us are shocking words. He clearly states that our heavenly Father will only forgive us on the condition that we forgive others!

- 14 For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:
- 15 But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. -Matthew 6

He uses one of the smallest words in the Bible, “if,” to show us one of the largest stumbling blocks to our receiving the promise of salvation through forgiveness of sins. This word is used more than 1400 times in the Bible. Its use means that the first part of a statement must be true in order for the second part of the statement to also be true. In other words, it is a conditional word that tells us that a certain thing must be done in order for another thing to happen.

Yahweh gives a clear example of a conditional statement in His promise of blessings for us:

- 1 And it shall come to pass, if you shall listen diligently to the voice of Yahweh your God, to observe *and* to do all his commandments which I command you this day, that Yahweh your God will set you on high above all nations of the earth:
- 2 And all these blessings shall come on you, and overtake you, if you shall listen to the voice of Yahweh your God. -Deuteronomy 28

This means Yahweh’s promise of blessings is not absolute, but conditional. It is effectively an “if-then” statement, such as those that basic computer programmers use. IF we are to receive His blessings, THEN we must listen to His voice.

The “if-then” condition is made many more times in the Bible by the context of the way the statement is written. For example, Yahshua says that we are already condemned and will remain so unless we believe on His name (which means Yahweh is salvation):

- 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.
- 18 He that believes on him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. -John 3

The implication of this statement is that IF we believe on His name, THEN we are not condemned. Conversely, IF we do not believe on His name, THEN we are already condemned.

Paul clearly states conditional salvation:

- 9 That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Yahshua, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. -Romans 10

Philip said that believing “with all your heart” was a condition for being baptized:

- 36 And as they went on *their way*, they came to a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is water*; what does hinder me to be baptized?
- 37 And Philip said, If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said, I believe that Yahshua the Messiah is the Son of God. -Acts 8

**So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading. — Nehemiah 8:8**

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Yahshua said that unless we believe in Him, we shall die in our sins:

24 I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins: for if you believe not that I am *he*, you shall die in your sins. -John 8

In other words, Yahshua said that IF we do not believe in Him, THEN we shall die in our sins.

He also said that IF we love Him, THEN we are to keep His commandments:

15 If you love me, keep my commandments. -John 14
All of the commandments, He said, are summed up in just two. We are commanded to love God and to love others:

37 Yahshua said to him, You shall love the Lord *Yahweh* your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second *is* like unto it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. -Matthew 22

How must we love God? We must love Him completely, without holding anything back.

The kind of love He is talking about is the kind that *Yahweh* has for us. He loves us so much that He gave His “only begotten son.” IF we believe in Him, THEN we will have “everlasting life.”

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. -John 3

This love is called “agape” love. It is translated from the Greek word *αγαπω* (agapao). It is selfless unconditional love. *Yahweh*’s love for us is not based on our goodness. He loves us even while we are sinners:

8 But God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, the Messiah died for us. -Romans 5

In other words, God loves us, even as sinners, so much that He sent the Messiah to die as the “propitiation” (appeasement) for our sins so that they could be forgiven:

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10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. -1 John 4

If we claim to love Him but we hate others, then we are lying about our love for God.

20 If a man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? -1 John 4

It is because of God’s love that He forgives sins. Therefore, it follows, that if we love others then we will also forgive them for the sins (wrongs) that they have committed against us.

Peter asked Yahshua how many times must he forgive someone that has committed a sin against him. The answer may have been shocking to Peter:

21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

22 Yahshua said to him, I say not to you, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. -Matthew 18

Yahshua told Peter that he must forgive the offender more than once. In fact, He said that even forgiving the offender seven times was not enough. He must continue to forgive him, even up to four hundred and ninety times! In other words, he must completely forgive him. That forgiveness must continue until he has gotten rid of all of the unforgiveness in his heart.

While *Yahweh* forgives us for our sins, Satan does not. Instead, as the accuser, Satan is continually identifying and counting our faults against us before God:

10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now has come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Messiah: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. -Revelation 12

Instead of forgiving us, Satan is bent upon revenge and punishment. However, if we continue to trust *Yahweh* and keep His commandments, He will ultimately use the evil that Satan brings upon us as a blessing:

10 Fear none of those things which you shall suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days: be you faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life. -Revelation 2

The Greek word that is translated as “forgive” is *αφιημι* (aphiemi). It means to send away, let go, or give up a debt. IF we claim to love God, THEN we will also love others. IF we do, THEN we will follow His example by freely and completely giving up the debts that were owed to us:

32 And be you kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for the Messiah’s sake has forgiven you. -Ephesians 4

These words are plain: “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.”