

## Forgiving, Thanks For

By Ed Allen

As we pass beyond Christmas, a season for giving, we are reminded that the joy we receive in giving is a measure of our desire to make others happy. Joy is a gift from the Lord for our charities - wanting to make others happy without recompense. Yes, there is joy in both giving and receiving; and as we pass into the New Year, we may consider the subtle gift of forgiving. Being forgiven relieves us from the debt; we are excused as the offender; and forgiving frees us from the resentment created by the offense - stored anger.

“One of the biggest factors for elimination of anger is forgiveness.” (Anger, p. 108)[1]

The Lord was born on earth to remind us of the true meaning of charity - doing good for others, even those who offend us. With charity comes mercy, and with mercy comes forgiveness.

“Forgiveness is not holy amnesia which erases the past, instead it is the experience of healing which draws the poison out. You may recall the hurt but you will not relive the hurt.” (Ibid., p. 122)

A vivid Biblical example of forgiving is expressed by the prodigal son who demanded his inheritance, and after wasting it, became wiser. In humility, returned to his father, who warmly welcomed him home, forgiven. The father harbored no anger toward the son, and he still wanted good things for him. (Luke 15:11-32 [2], and NCL February 1987, pp. 57-58 [3]) By forgiving we want good things for others.

But forgiving is conditional; it does *not* say evil is OK; it allows a new beginning. It expects repentance, a promise not to commit the offense. However, the patience of forgiveness understands rehabilitation takes effort and time. Fixing our faults is a gradual process. When we forgive, resentment is extinguished, condemnation proceedings are terminated, and our thoughts can move forward from the debts of the past to productivity and the future, as we build on the goods in others, and put aside the offenses.

And how often should we forgive? The Lord forgives to every one his sins, and never takes vengeance...nevertheless sins are not washed away, for this can be done only by repentance. (TCR 409)[4]. The Lord never condemns anyone. He forgives our errors, and removes them when we seek His help through repentance (AC 9938)[5]. The Lord is very patient with us. In like manner, the Lord has instructed us to forgive those who offend us.

*Forgive our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.*

Joy is the Lord's gift to us for charity; forgiving is a very satisfying form of charity.

### Bibliography and Notes (Thanks for Forgiving)

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1. Tim Lahaye and Bob Phillips, *Anger is a Choice*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids Michigan, 1982. Describes forgiveness as a major factor in freeing us from anger. However, when we forgive, we take on responsibility for the offense. True forgiveness never talks to others about the hurt or the offense (pp. 119,111).
2. Holy Bible, NKJV.

3. Eric Carswell, "Forgiving Others", *New Church Life*, February, 1987, General Church of the New Jerusalem, General Church Press, Bryn Athyn, PA. Forgiveness in the sense of the 'Prodigal Son' means that he harbored no anger toward his son (p. 57). The more clearly we recognize ourselves as being in the need of forgiveness, the more likely we are to give it to others (p. 58,
4. Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christian Religion (TCR)*, The Swedenborg Society, London, 1950 (First published 1771).
5. Emanuel Swedenborg, *Arcana Coelestia (AC)*, The Swedenborg Society, London, 1976 (First published 1749- 1756).