

# Even as Christ Forgives You, So Also Do Ye

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We can all receive unspeakable peace and partnering with our Savior as we learn to freely forgive those who have trespassed against us.

“Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

“And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

“And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

“And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

“And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

“He is not here, but is risen.”<sup>1</sup>

Tomorrow, the Easter Sabbath, we will remember in a special way what Jesus Christ has done for us: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”<sup>2</sup> Eventually, we will be resurrected as He was, to live forever.

Through the miracle of the sacred Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can also receive the gift of forgiveness of our sins and misdeeds, if we accept the opportunity and responsibility of repentance. And by receiving necessary ordinances, keeping covenants, and obeying commandments, we can gain eternal life and exaltation.

Today, I want to focus on forgiveness, an essential and precious gift offered to us from our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

On a December night in 1982, my wife, Terry, and I were awakened by a phone call to our home in Pocatello, Idaho. As I answered the phone, I heard only sobbing. Finally, my sister’s struggling voice said, “Tommy is dead.”

A 20-year-old drunk driver, speeding at more than 85 miles (135 km) per hour, recklessly ran a stoplight in a suburb of Denver, Colorado. He crashed violently into the car driven by my youngest brother, Tommy, instantly killing him and his wife, Joan. They were returning home to a young daughter after a Christmas party.

My wife and I immediately flew to Denver and made our way to the mortuary. We gathered with my parents and siblings and grieved the loss of our beloved Tommy and Joan. We had lost

them to a senseless criminal act. Our hearts were broken, and anger toward the young offender began to well up inside me.

Tommy had served as a lawyer in the United States Department of Justice and was on a course to be a strong advocate for protection of Native American lands and natural resources for years to come.

After some time had passed, a court sentencing hearing was held for the young man found responsible for vehicular manslaughter. In their ongoing grief and sorrow, my parents and oldest sister, Katy, attended the hearing. The drunk driver's parents were also there, and after the hearing concluded, they sat on a bench and wept. My parents and sister were sitting nearby as they sought to gain control of their own emotions. After a moment, my parents and sister stood up and walked to the driver's parents and offered them words of comfort and forgiveness. The men shook hands; the women held hands; there was deep sorrow and tears for all and a recognition that both families had suffered immensely. Mom, Dad, and Katy led the way with their quiet strength and courage and showed our family what forgiveness looks like.

That outreach of forgiveness in those moments caused my own heart to soften and opened a pathway to healing. Over time I learned how to have a forgiving heart. Only with the help of the Prince of Peace was my painful burden lifted. My heart will always miss Tommy and Joan, but forgiveness now allows me to remember them with unfettered joy. And I know we will be together again as a family.

I am not suggesting that we condone unlawful conduct. We know full well that individuals are to be held accountable for their criminal acts and civil wrongdoings. However, we also know that, as sons and daughters of God, we follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. We are to be forgiving even when it seems others may not warrant our forgiveness.

The Savior taught:

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

"But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."<sup>3</sup>

We can all receive unspeakable peace and partnering with our Savior as we learn to freely forgive those who have trespassed against us. This partnering brings the Savior's power into our lives in an unmistakable and never-to-be-forgotten way.

The Apostle Paul counseled:

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, ... bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another ... : *even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*"<sup>4</sup>

The Lord Himself declared:

"Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

"I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men."<sup>5</sup>

The teachings of our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, are clear; the sinner must be willing to forgive others if he or she hopes to obtain forgiveness.<sup>6</sup>

Brothers and sisters, are there people in our lives who have hurt us? Do we harbor what seem like fully justified feelings of resentment and anger? Are we letting pride keep us from forgiving and letting go? I invite all of us to forgive completely and let healing occur from within. And even if forgiveness doesn't come today, know that as we desire it and work for it, it will come—just as it eventually did for me after my brother's death.

Please also remember that an essential element of forgiveness includes forgiving ourselves.

"He who has repented of his sins," the Lord said, "the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more."<sup>7</sup>

I plead for all of us this day to remember and follow the example of Jesus Christ. On the cross at Golgotha, in His anguish, He uttered these words: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."<sup>8</sup>

By having a forgiving spirit and acting upon it, like my parents and oldest sister, we can realize the promise of the Savior: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."<sup>9</sup>

I witness this peace will come into our lives as we heed the teachings of Jesus Christ and follow His example by forgiving others. As we forgive, I promise the Savior will strengthen us, and His power and joy will flow into our lives.

The tomb is empty. Christ lives. I know Him. I love Him. I am grateful for His grace, which is the strengthening power that is sufficient to heal all things. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.