

# FORGIVENESS

If You, Lord, should mark iniquities,  
O Lord, who could stand?  
But there is forgiveness with You,  
That You may be feared.

*Psalms 130:3-4*

None fear the Lord like those who have experienced his forgiving love. Gratitude for pardon produces far more fear and reverence of God than all the dread which is inspired by punishment. If the Lord were to execute justice upon all, there would be none left to fear him; if all were under apprehension of his deserved wrath, despair would harden them against fearing him: it is grace which leads the way to a holy regard of God, and a fear of grieving him.

*Charles Haddon Spurgeon*

SO MUCH OF THE LORD'S ECONOMY—His way of doing things—runs counter to the ways of the world. In this temporal society fear is gained through retaliation, revenge, brute strength, while the demonstration of mercy or forbearance usually gains only disdain. In this world fear is gained by exerting power over others. We respect those we fear because we fear their ability to harm us.

We may not like what the Russian president, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, is doing in Ukraine, but even if we cannot respect him as a person we can respect his strength of will and his desire to strengthen the hand of his own country. Would we still respect him if he bowed to the weaker will of the weaker president, Barack Hussein Obama II, and pulled his troops back home? Would we still fear him? Could we fear anyone who submitted in the face of impotence?



In God's world it is the other way around.

Look to the cross. What immeasurable strength it took, what force of will, for the Son of God to yield to the weaker will of human flesh! Jesus Christ had at His command the very forces of heaven, yet He permitted mere humans to have their way with Him. He could have called down the

fierce wrath of God the Father upon those who dared to drive spikes through Him, pinning Him to the tree.

But He didn't. Instead Jesus demonstrated mercy. With His blood still dripping into Golgotha's barren soil, He forgave.

When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."

*Luke 23:33-34a*



God the Father's response to this? Did the Son's submission before those weaker than Himself gain the respect of His Father?

And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe

and tongue and people and nation."

*Revelation 5:6-9*

Jesus the Lamb of God, because He is God, has the character of God. It is a character that shows mercy, and forgives, when it has every right to condemn and destroy.

No one has more power and strength than God, yet no one is as longsuffering and kind as God: He gives when He doesn't have to; that is grace. He forgives when He doesn't have to; that is mercy.

Even so we fear—we respect, are frightened by—His unbounded power, His might. His kindness does not mask His omnipotence. At the same time we fear—a holy fear, a reverence—His limitless mercy and grace.

And here is the pattern for every believer. The strength of our witness to others is our kindness toward the undeserving. In this submission, this sacrifice and humility in the face of impotent flesh, the power of God is at work.

If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat;  
And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;  
For you will heap burning coals on his head,  
And the Lord will reward you.

*Proverbs 25:21-22*

