

Principles of spiritual life

(6/12)

How to earn

The peace of forgiveness
and be liberated from the sense of guilt

BY

House of God's Love

Book name: Book series of Principles of Spiritual Life

(7/12) How to earn inner peace? The peace of forgiveness

(2/3)

By: Servants of God's Love Hostel

First Edition

7455/2016

I.S.B.N. 978-9779-038-59-9

- We hope in Christ that this series would reach the hand of every Christian youth for the least cost.
- You could share this hope by giving it to your friends, loved ones and children in church as a gift.



His Holiness Pope Tawadros II

Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox
Church (118)

Introduction

Many suffer from lassitude in their spiritual lives, and the reason would often be the sense of guilt and uncertainty about full forgiveness. For sin is a separator from God if one does not repent and trust totally in forgiveness.

Forgiveness is the gate to Christianity. If you do not accept forgiveness for all of your sins, then, forgive me, you are not a Christian yet.

How to I accept full forgiveness? What is real repentance?

This is what you will find out in this booklet. However, you should remember that this is a progressive approach made up of cumulative steps that have to be taken in order if you desire a concrete result and real growth in your spiritual life.

May God grant us to trust in the forgiveness of all our sins with His blood, through the intercession of our Mother the Virgin Mary, and the prayers of our blessed father Pope Tawadros II. To God our Lord be the glory in His church, forever, Amen.

I headed towards my father at sunset. On my way, I felt a bit anxious and frustrated. Memories rolled in front of me and all my evils flowed before my eyes one by one. I kept hearing as though Satan was screaming and accusing me with an ugly hoarse voice ‘you are a sinner, you are impure’, and focused on the sins which caused others to sin. Even childhood was not spared. When I said I repented, he would whisper devilishly ‘Ha, you have not confessed it’. I wondered how I remembered all those sins: heavy sins and situations that caused sin. His voice kept coming ‘you are a sinner; you are impure and evil’. No matter how hard I tried to escape or to pretend to forget, I could not. I showed up at my father’s place so sad and heavy-hearted. My Father welcomed me and asked: why are you so heavy-hearted and sad? Haven’t we taken the morning peace?’

I smiled and said: but we’re now at sunset. After I followed what you had told me, and transformed every thought into prayer, I felt great comfort. However, on my way here, ugly old memories blew over me. I remembered all of my sins and

a sense of guilt is killing me. I am even unable to feel my prayers. I feel there is a separator between me and God that holds Him from hearing me.'

He replied, calmly and kindly: I feel for you, son. This is a harsh war; but do not fear, today we will solve this serious problem, which is indeed a problem of all human beings and a cause of people's misery and trouble, even though they might not be aware of it. Today we will talk about

The sunset peace.

I said: What is the sunset peace, father?

He said: The sunset peace is the 'peace of forgiveness'.

I said: What is the meaning of the peace of forgiveness, and why is it called the sunset peace?

He said: Thoughts come to you at sunset, at the time of calm and memories, to tell you 'do you remember', and you'd answer back 'what is it that I remember?' They would say, 'do you remember the sins that you committed long ago? The sins committed during primary school were a problem, but those committed in secondary school are catastrophic.' You would say, 'but I repented', and they would say, 'Ha, come here, you have not confessed this sin; and that one was not confessed properly. Those sins, even if you confessed them: do you truly

believe they were forgiven? Ha, all are still there, all are still there.

I said: True, this is what happens to me. But how do I get over it, father?

He said: This is a serious war my son, it's a big problem. In fact, it is a calamity and a decisive matter.

I said: What does that mean? You scared me with your words.

He said: Why did Christ come to Earth? He came to forgive our sins. To forgive not only Adam's sins, but also the sins of all people. Thus, whoever who does not accept forgiveness has not benefited from Christ. That's why John the Baptist, when he saw Jesus, he cried "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). He came to take away the sin of the world, so if I do not put all my sins on him and trust that he carried them for me, then I have not benefited anything from Christ. Also, in the book of Micah, the Bible stated "He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:19). They call it the sea of forgetfulness. One of the fathers says that God places a sign on that sea that says

"NO FISHING".

God will not fish for you, and Satan could not fish for you. So, do not fish for yourself and do not let Satan fish for you. Moreover, the Bible says, "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). It states the word "all" sin, not some, not most, not the majority, but all sin.

Furthermore, it says "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isaiah 1:18).

God says let us reason: I know your problem is your sin. If it were red and dirty, it will become pure like snow and pure wool. I will forgive all sins, I will wipe them out totally. I will transform them into glory, blessing and grace. In addition, He says I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.

The Bible also says "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). This means that if you do not accept forgiveness, then you are dead. It means that hell awaits you (in a rickshaw, a bus, or a van, this is where you will go". The Bible also says, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God" (Isaiah 59:2). So, if you do not trust in full forgiveness, then

you are separated from God and do not have a relationship with Him, and your prayers are not heard.

I said: This is serious what you're saying, father? Now what?

My Father whispered: I will tell you a secret, my son, but do not be cross with me.

I said, curiously: Please, father, go ahead.

He whispered:

He who does not accept the forgiveness of *all* his sins is not a Christian.

I said, feeling scared inside of me: What do you mean, father?

He said: In the first chapter of the New Testament, the Bible says, "you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1: 21)

Christ came to deliver us from sin, and he who did not accept the salvation did not accept the Christ. He who did not believe that Christ has forgiven all of his sins is not a Christian; or is a Christian in name only, in appearance, habit, inheritance, but in reality is not a Christian.

But what is the difference, my son, between Buddha, Confucius and any other religion, and the Lord Jesus Christ?

I said: What is it, father?

He said: All those set out principles, religions and rituals, whether human or satanic; while the Lord Jesus gave Himself, shed His blood. For without shedding of blood there is no remission (Hebrews 9:22). He shed His blood to forgive us. The wage of sin is death, and He died for us.

I said: What do I do to get earn this forgiveness, father?

He said: By faith and repentance. Do you believe that Christ has died for you to forgive your sins my son?

I said: Of course, I believe that Christ has died for me to forgive my sins and save me. I smiled and said: I am a Christian, father! But what, in your view, is repentance, father?

He said: **Rather**, in the Bible's view and in the fathers' view. It consists of three phrases:

Feel Remorse for the past – Be determined not to fall again – Accept forgiveness

I said: Please elaborate, Father.

He said: First, feel remorse for the past, i.e. feel sorry for disappointing God, regret having sinned to him and being separated from him. Imagine that you disappointed your

father, then you went to him carelessly saying “oh, I’m sorry dad”. What would he do?

I said: He’d be disappointed more. He’d think I’m teasing and bothering him more.

He said: Exactly. But you should feel the sorrow of remorse and not that of desperation and loss of hope. Saint Paul made a distinction between two types of sorrow, “For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” (2 Corinthians 7:10)

In summer vacation after the end of the academic year, Mina went to visit his family in Upper Egypt. One day, his father went to wake him up to come and have breakfast together. Mina was upset and hurled loudly “I want to sleep, I don’t want to eat”. Hours later he woke up and remembered what he’d done to his father. He went to his dad and apologized saying that he wasn’t fully awake, and that he sometimes did things while asleep and unaware. His father accepted his apology and said with a smile, “May God help your friends who live in the hostel.” Around the dining table, Mina began to cry and sob. His father asked him, “What is wrong with you Mina, are you feeling well?

He said, "No. I feel sorry for upsetting you this morning." His father said, "Oh no, it's over son, I forgave you. You were not fully aware, so, it's OK." Mina said, "Have you really forgiven me, dad?" He said, "Yes, I really did, son." At supper, the same thing happened. Mina started to cry for the same reason, and his dad kept comforting him. The next day, he'd wake up early and sit with his family at the dining table and begin to cry. Now, his dad asks why, and Mina replies that it is because of the incident of yesterday. The father says that he had forgiven him: my son I have forgiven you, are you going to keep on the sadness and sorrow?

I said: indeed, this is being gloomy, not apologetic!!

He said: this is our story with Christ every day when we do not accept forgiveness and keep on weeping and sobbing; when we do not want to trust that he had forgiven us. Repentance is not constant weeping. The Lord Jesus said that there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. There is joy in heaven while we sense guilt and feel lost every day. We then hear about wonderful stories, my son, on this topic. It was said that a person kept crying for forty years to make sure that God had forgiven him for stealing cucumber from the field when he was a child.

I smiled and said: I wonder what he would have done if he'd stolen a watermelon or a melon. He would have cried for eighty years. But wouldn't that make me careless?

He said: Son, understand what I'm saying properly and fully. When you are hit with carelessness or judging, remember your sins and your weakness before the sin and your hurting of the feelings of Christ.

When you are hit with desperation and loss of hope, remember God's love to you and the joy in heaven with sinners and hold on to hope. This is what we have already mentioned and named as "the rule of spiritual balance". However, in both cases, we have to trust that the sin has been forgiven (as long as repentance was offered). For if you do not trust in that, you'd be far from Christ and have not accepted his forgiveness yet. The message of Christ is salvation, so not accepting forgiveness means that you have not accepted Christ, thus, you would not be a Christian.

Second: Be determined not to fall to sin again, i.e. you intend not to sin again. Please pay attention, son, for I am saying "you do not intend", not "you will not sin". There's a big difference.

I said: How, father?

He said: some say that “real repentance is never to fall to sin again.”

I said: yes, I did hear that, father.

He said: do you believe that?

I said, reluctantly: I do not know, but I think that is impossible for me to never fall to sin all my life after I repent, particularly certain sins.

He said: Such statement, if meant literally, is unrealistic and illogic. It closes the door of returning and repentance before the youth (and this is one of the underlying real causes of atheism). For when a youth finds himself falling to sins every day, and they tell him that his repentance is not real, he gives up because he is unable to repent. He would say “I quit” just like a little kid who keeps failing in a game would say “I quit” and goes home. We will come to that in detail when we discuss the real reasons for atheism. Such statements block the way before all people. They even provide Satan, sorry to say, a sword with which to kill the people of the Lord.

I said, feeling scared: Oh, why my Father?

He said: Because Satan in his war with us does nothing but focus on one sin or two. His main purpose is not to make us fall to sin, but rather to drive us to desperation as we

mentioned. The phrase 'real repentance means never going back to sin', if meant literally, is against the Bible, my son.

I said: How is that?

He said: Is it possible that the holiest saint on Earth could say one day that "on this day, with the grace of God, I am with no sin because I repented for all my sins." Or could a monk, after fifty years of monasticism, say "today I overcame all the sins and offered true repentance, and will never fall again."

I said: Of course not.

He said: Then, son, you have to be careful because Satan wants to drive you to desperation. The Bible says "For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again" (Proverbs 24: 16). The Lord Jesus said to Peter to forgive his brother seventy times seven (i.e. $70 \times 70 \times 70 \times 70 \times 70 \times 70 \times 70 = \dots$), so how much would He forgive us.

I said: I'm afraid of carelessness, father.

He said: Do you want to fall in sin again?

I said: Of course not, father. I'm so glad I got rid of sin and never want to fall to it again; but I still fear of falling, father.

He said: What matters is to put in your heart that you won't fall; however, if you do, you get up again. The Bible said: "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not

sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (1 John 2: 1), which means that you should put in your heart that you won’t sin, and if you do, repent and the expiatory advocacy of the Blood of Christ will forgive you.

For real repentance is regretting your sin to Christ, and putting in your heart not to fall again.

No one could say one day, no matter what his spiritual level or rank is, even a few hours before passing away, that ‘I am without sin this day’, or that ‘I got angry but never got angry again’, or that ‘I judged but never judged again’. So when a saint repents, then falls to sin: wasn’t his first repentance real? Or would a day come when he’d say I repented for all sins a real repentance and I no longer fall to such sins?

A youth asked a servant why one would fall again to the sin which he repented for. He replied that his repentance was definitely not genuine. He said why? I cried and regretted what I did! So please show me how to repent genuinely. He told him do not fall to sin again. He said how could I not fall to sin again? He said when you repent genuinely. Here, the youth sighed in desperation and said it seems I’ll never repent genuinely. So do not load yourself with a burden that is

beyond your ability to carry. Such repentance is an illusion. Rather, know the Bible well, for God forgives us a lot.

Only never say in your heart I'll sin then I'll repent; for this is cheating.

For maybe you will not be able to repent, or you might not find the time to repent. As we mentioned the statement by Saint Ambrosius when we talked about God's unconditional love (Part 5) (and the story of the guy who smoked weed). Put in your heart that you won't sin to God, and if you do, trust that God will accept you and repent, and know that there is joy in heaven with one sinner who repents.

I said: Is there joy in heaven every time I repent, even if I do that more than once a day?

He said: Yes, for every time you repent there is joy in heaven, not just once in a lifetime.

I said: And what is the third phrase concerning repentance, father?

He said: The third phrase is 'to accept forgiveness and rejoice for it'.

You have to accept God's forgiveness and trust in it, and remember that if you do not accept forgiveness you deserve

to die and be thrown into Hades. If you do not accept forgiveness, you are separated and disconnected from God.

If you do not accept forgiveness, then, frankly, you are not a Christian yet, no hard feelings.

Imagine the Lord Jesus calling out “I am the savior of the world, he who believes in me shall be forgiven and will have life”, and there are two persons who are listening to him. One believed and repented and accepted forgiveness. The other did not believe and has not accepted, so which of them will be forgiven?

I said: Of course the one who believed in forgiveness. But is forgiveness that easy, father? I have not expected that.

He said: There is justice in spiritual life, son. It is written, “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). Sin is so close to us. But, even though sin is that close, forgiveness is also close. Just repent and God will forgive you. God wants to forgive; He even longs to forgive, for He says:

“Come now, and let us reason together,” says the LORD, “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Isaiah 1:18). God knows that the reason of our weakness and

misery is sin and the sense of guilt. Satan, at most, could make us fall to sin and lock us up in the circle of guilt. But Christ has moved us to the circle of forgiveness with His Blood (1Corinthians: 13). Thus the Bible strongly emphasizes the message of forgiveness, for it is the message of Christianity.

**Forgiveness is the gate through which I access
Christianity.**

He who does not trust in that is not a Christian yet. What is the difference between someone who says I am a Christian, and we ask him: do you trust in the forgiveness of all you sins? And he says no. The sins committed in primary, preparatory and secondary stages are all there; and another who says: no, I am an atheist.

I said: Is it that serious, father?

He said: Yes. This is the message of Christ and the work of Christ. It is not negotiable: either I accept full forgiveness, or I am not a Christian or am a Christian by name only. Therefore, the Bible has put strong emphasis on that frequently.

- "I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you." (Isaiah 44: 22)

- "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins." (Isaiah 43:25)

- "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7)

- "Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the LORD your God," (Jeremiah 3:13) "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin." (Ezekiel 18:30)

- "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent," (Acts 17:30)

- "Whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43)

- "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7)

- "Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your

evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?"
(Ezekiel 33:11)

And a lot more. And here, my father looked at me seriously and said: do you accept forgiveness, my son?

I said: Yes, I do. I accept, father. Would anyone decline a forgiveness as that? You clarified so many things that were confusing me, and causing me sadness and pain and sense of guilt. Your talk relieved me and gave me hope in our kind and gentle Christ, and confidence in forgiveness. It is really wonderful, this phrase of 'full forgiveness'. I won't fall to such obsessions once again.

He said: once H.H. late Pope Shenouda got a question from a person telling him I'm a 65-year-old. I committed a sin at the age of 5 and have not confessed it till now, but I repented. So, was it forgiven or not (given that I won't be able to say it to anyone until I die).

I said: What did the Pope say?

He said: He read the question, smiled and said: you have such a hard heart. God has forgiven you sixty years ago, and you haven't forgiven yourself?

Anyway, my son, you have only two paths: either you repent to God and trust in forgiveness; or you do not trust in forgiveness which means perishing, and is equivalent to being non-Christian.

Did I tell you the story of the young man who confessed in the dining hall?

I said: No, father.

He said: In a conference house, during summer, at dinner while everybody was eating, one young man stood up and shouted "O, you people". Everybody was astonished and looked what had become of him. He said, "I am a sinner, I am a sinner, pray for me, pray for me". Then he went around the dining hall saying "I curse, I swear, I steal, I think bad thoughts, I commit adultery and sodomy, pray for me, pray for me". Everybody was astonished and said to themselves, "this is the new Saint Moses the Black, this is a great saint. I would be ashamed to say that to my father of confession, but he confessed in front of everybody, this is a strong repentance."

But this man intended to do all those things again; would that be called repentance?

I said: Of course not, as long as he intends to commit the sins again. But why did he do that in front of everybody when he intended to do that again?

He said: Because he heard in a sermon that at the time of the apostles, people, before being baptized would confess before the congregation. He said to himself I'll confess all of my deeds before the people. People know that I am a sinner anyway, so I'll do whatever I like and then go around the dining hall and confess and take forgiveness for the entire previous year.

Would that be called repentance? Did he gain anything?

I laughed very hard.

My father asked: Why are you laughing so hard?

I said: Because he disgraced himself and benefited nothing. Even if he went around Tahrir Square, he would benefit nothing as long as he intended to commit the sins again.

He said: Thus, my son, put in your heart that you won't commit the sin again. But if you do fall, repent and trust in forgiveness. I emphasize again on the forgiveness, because if you do not repent for sin, it separates you from God. The wage of sin is death, so if you do not accept forgiveness for one sin,

then Hades will be awaiting you. And if you do not accept forgiveness, then, no offense, you are not a Christian.

Christ loved tax collectors and sinners. He did not disgrace the woman who was caught in the act and has not talked to her about details, like when she did it, with whom, how many times. He covered up for her and told her “I do not condemn you, go and sin no more”. With the Samaritan woman, he has not disgraced her saying that he knew everything about her and all the details of her evil deeds and that she should not deny it. He told her, well said and encouraged her to repent. He confessed in her place, and she, though she did not mention a single sin, acknowledged what he said.

This is the Christ that we worship, a kind, gentle and tender God. He just wants us to know that we are sinners, and that we do not want sin. He just wants us to return to Him, like the prodigal son. He took him in his bosom without rebuking him or saying “aha, now you come back and realize how dreadful your sin was. You inherited me while I was alive. You came back after you’ve been humiliated and insulted.” He would not even let him finish his sentence to state that would like to return as a servant. He interrupted him after he said, “I have sinned against heaven and in your sight”. So trust my son in

the forgiveness of Christ. Do not be suspicious and do not listen to anybody who would make you so.

I said: How?

He said: A brother who was away from the church told me that he once sat with a group with a servant among them. This brother said that he heard that the Pope received a question asking him whether God would forgive a sin the person committed when he was five years and repented for, but which he had never told or will be able to tell to anyone, and now he was 65 years old, and that the Pope told him “son you have a hard heart, God had forgiven you sixty years ago and you hadn’t forgiven yourself”. The servant said: you definitely misunderstood the question. The brother said: no, I heard it perfectly well as it was said. The servant said: then you haven’t listened to the full answer. The brother said: the answer was only two sentences and I heard them all. The servant said: then, The brother interrupted him saying: what’s wrong with you, why do wish to trouble me when I finally found hope and acceptance. Let us take forgiveness and get closer to Christ. Why do you slam the door in our faces, you’ll drive us to deny the presence of God”, and he quit the gathering.

So, we have to repent and intend not to commit sins. We also have to trust in full forgiveness. If you fall, get up quickly.

I said: It seems that denying the presence of God (atheism) is related to non-forgiveness.

He said: Of course there is a strong relation. Having no trust in full forgiveness makes a man fear punishment and fear God, so he would resort to the approach of an ostrich.

I said: And what is the approach of the ostrich?

He said: When a hunter hunts an ostrich, the ostrich keeps running until it senses that the hunter was too close. So, it would bury its head in the ground and say, wow, it's night now, there is no hunter. It would remain there until the hunter would catch it. The same happens to a person who does not accept forgiveness; who would fear God and deny his presence in order to get rid of Him and of His punishment.

I said: Wow, I never thought that not accepting forgiveness would be that fatal!

He said: In fact this is a lack of awareness on our part, we servants. When we hear someone say that his sins remain and that he doubts forgiveness, we do not pay attention.

In the meantime, when we hear that somebody is thinking of denying the presence of God and of leaving Christ, we care

and we run and ask; although their fate is the same. We care about the appearance and name, we care about the shame and disgrace, but we don't care about the person's salvation and eternity. It is like: you may go to hell as a Christian, but to leave Christ, no that's unacceptable.

Accordingly, we do not find anyone preaching about forgiveness in gatherings as it should be. They just keep saying, repent, repent! So, we repented, would there be forgiveness, would there be acceptance? They'd say: don't ask, all you have to do is repent! You want to repent and be forgiven too? Just repent!!

Frankly, servants have long refrained from speaking about the full (Ephesians 1:7) and free (Romans 3:24) forgiveness. The Senexarium mentioned that God told St. John the Short (in a vision) about St. Ba'eesa who was an adulterer, and who died before reaching the monastery, but her repentance was accepted the very moment she repented.

In fact, people would remain non-Christian under any name: atheist or Christian in appearance. All have the same fate; for he who does not accept and trust in forgiveness is no different from non-Christians (which will be discussed in detail

under the reasons of atheism and the criteria of a true Christian, and where you'll encounter really scary things, son).

I said: There is even more, father. Every day I find out new things about God's love and his proximity to us, and about acceptance and forgiveness, as if I weren't a Christian. But is that all about the peace of forgiveness, or is there more to it?

He said: That was the first point, which is self-forgiveness.

The second point is: forgiveness of others.

I said: What does it mean, forgiveness of others?

He said: Satan would come to you and say: do you remember primary and preparatory school? You'd say: it's over, the past is over. He'd tell you: no, everything is there.

The boy who used to hit you in prep school, when you see him you want to hit him. The teacher who bullied you in prep school, you meet him in the street and you say, oh I wish a car hit him. A guy once told me that his friends in high school seduced him and taught him bad habits when he was innocent. They tarnished his mind. Every time he fell he wished he could strangle them one by one. Another told me: It is my father. I said: what's the matter with him? He said: he loved and spoiled me, but after my brother was born seven years later, they ignored me. I haven't forgiven them. Another

told me: my uncle, he hit me when I was in third primary when I did nothing wrong. I haven't forgiven him until now, although we are friends. Do you have such incidents, my son? Has someone been unfair to you? Someone who caused you to sin, embarrassed you, or hurt your feelings?

I said (after a while): Why do you remind me of troubling memories, father. Definitely there are some people in my life whom I could not forget what they did to me. They caused me to sin. Others changed the path of my life with their injustice.

I stopped for a while then said: even among close kin, I remember hard and painful things.

He said: Yes, son, I meant those hard and painful things. I meant the close kin, relatives, friends and family. Do you remember all that?

I said, after a period of silence: Yes, I remember a lot. Some people I love them, but ... but there are dark spots in their dealings with me that I could not forgive. Whenever I look inside of me I find very old stuff that is still effective.

He said: Do you forgive them, son?

I said: Forgive? How? After all the distress, after all the suffering, after all the trouble, I forgive? You do not understand, father, they ruined my life. They troubled me and

I still suffer. Forgive me, you have not experienced what I did. You are speaking largely.

He said: The Lord Jesus is a perfect example. In Mathew 18, it is mentioned that there was a king who was rich and who lent people. One servant had borrowed large amounts totalling 10,000 talents, which is big money equivalent today to 50 million dollars. It seems he was a merchant, but a bad one; so each time he'd lose money, he'd ask for a loan. Until his master once asked him to pay back. He begged him pleading that this time God will help him gain some money. But the master, that once, was serious and said: if you do not pay back I'll put you in jail. When that servant saw that, he cried and pleaded to be granted a grace period and he'd pay back. So, the master, when he saw him pleading, he made a decision, but the servant did not believe him.

I said: What is the decision?

He said: He did not tell him I'll give you time, or I'll reduce the interest. He told him I'll forgive you the debt. I'll forgive you. Imagine: a person forgiving a debt of 50 million dollars.

I said: That's a huge amount, father!

He said: Indeed it is! The servant left without believing.

I said: How?

He said: He met a fellow servant who had borrowed 100 dinars from him, i.e. 100 dollars. He caught him by his shirt, humiliated him and insisted that he pay. He pleaded, have patience with me, I'll work this week and pay you back. But he said, now, pay now or go to jail. And indeed, he threw him in jail. He did not have compassion for his fellow's pleading. The master heard and was angry. He summoned the servant.

I said: What did he do to him?

He said: He said I forgave you a large amount. Have you forgotten that I forgave you a big debt? But you have not accepted that. He ordered that he be thrown in jail.

My Father then looked at me and said: Has God forgiven you a lot or a little?

I said: A whole lot.

He said: God stands before you and says: forgive all those who troubled you or been unfair to you, for my sake. What would you say?

I said: This is quite hard.

He said: Indeed it is hard; thus forgiving others has two levels.

I said: But isn't forgetting enough, father? I will forget, I will forget all those incidents, I'll even forget those people.

He said: Forgetting is not forgiveness, son.

I said: How?

He said: Forgiveness is to remember the incidents but to give up your right to revenge. The incidents would be there as history without any effect.

It is as though you give up your right at a court of law and file a reconciliation report. The past is there but you, voluntarily, waiver it for the sake of Christ only.

Now, Father addressed a question to me: Did Christ forgive you much or little.

I said: Very much.

He said: He is begging you 'for my sake, please forgive'.

I said: And what is forgetting?

He said: Forgetting is to try to forget and evade reality. You might succeed in doing that. But when the incident comes back, it comes with all its pains and bitterness. It does not come in the consciousness and awareness; it remains in the subconscious. It would still bother you in the subconscious. Apparently you seem to have forgotten, while it is still there within you with all its pain and bitterness. This is one of the main reasons that causes one to be uncomfortable and

discontented for no obvious reason. One would say I feel unhappy and down, but I don't know why!

I said: True, this happens to me a lot! What do I do, father? I am very troubled; so will forgiveness relieve the pain and heal the wounds?

He said: Yes, my son. Psychologists, away from religion, say that 75% of psychological problems are caused by non-forgiveness to oneself or to others.

The lack of forgiveness causes psychological problems to you, even when they are not obvious outwardly. They are there inwardly, eating you up like termites destroy wood.

Moreover, son, if you don't forgive, Christ won't forgive you.

This means that all your sins and errors will remain on your head. You'll be condemned because of them. Do you understand what that means?

I said: I know, father, I know. I know that Hedes will be my fate, and perishing will be my end.

He said: What are you going to do about it?

I said: Knowing that there is no other solution, I'll forgive. I'll forgive them all as Christ has forgiven me. But what do I do with my hurt feelings?

He said: Forgiveness is of two levels.

I said: What are they?

He said: The first level is the will: meaning to decide to forgive before actually forgiving. To say, I'll forgive for your sake, God.

I said: What is the second level:

He said: The second level is the feeling. For God does not treat us a rocks or stones, but as humans with feelings and emotions. For you can't tell a person who hurt you badly I forgive you, and when you see him on the street you hug him saying "hi, my friend and brother".

I said: Then what?

He said: Forgiveness with your heart and feeling needs time. Your feelings will remain hurt and wounded for a while; that's only natural. God does not ask what is beyond your ability.

I said: After that, I'd have forgiven?

He said: Yes, son. Once you decide to forgive for the sake of Christ; that would be full forgiveness before God.

I said: How do I earn forgiveness with my feelings?

He said: When you are swept with feelings of grudge, hatred and anger, you do not say “he destroyed me, I hope he gets cancer or a car hits him”. Thus, you would not have forgiven but you are kidding yourself.

Once there was a small fire in a small pile of papers. A person took a bottle and tried to put it out. But each time he spilled liquid from the bottle, the fire became worse. Another saw him and asked: what are you doing. He said: putting out the fire. The other told him: but the bottle contains gas. He said: no problem, I’ll still put out the fire. Is he really going to put out the fire?

I said: Of course not; he’ll make it worse.

He said: So, when the feelings of grudge and pain sweep you, do not let in feelings of revenge and evil. Feelings of pain will come, but when they do pray as follows:

“God, help me forgive as You have forgiven me; make me accept him as You have accepted me; save me from the feelings of hatred and grudge.”

I said: All I have to do is pray this prayer?

He said: Yes, son. Pray this prayer that will give you calm and peace; and heal your hurt feelings. If the matter needs time, be it long or short, trust that your feelings will be completely healed. I assure you that with time, the feelings of pain and hatred will be transformed into feelings of love and acceptance.

I said: Does that count as forgiveness?

He said: Yes, it does.

I said: What do you advise me to do?

He said: My advice to you comprises a big psychological part. As we mentioned on forgiving the sins of the past, get a white paper and write down the names of all those who hurt you, who troubled you, persecuted you, abused you, betrayed you, opened your eyes on evil things, whether friends or relatives, those who love you or hate you, whether you still or no longer see them. Write down the names. If you do not remember the names, write down the incidents.

I said: What if I forgot someone?

He said: If you forgot, son, Christ also forgot. After you write what you remembered, write at the bottom “I’ll forgive

for your sake, Lord". Then shred the paper and burn it or throw it in the trash bin.

I said: What about me? The injustice that I faced? The years in which I suffered and the bitterness that I experienced?

He said: Do not fear. God will compensate you for all that. God "executes justice for the oppressed" (Psalms 146:7), every point of weakness will become a point of strength, "Out of the eater came something to eat". He transforms the shadow of death into morning, "Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree" and He will "restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten".

Therefore, beloved,
never postpone
working on your inner
purity not even for a
short while; but haste
to repent upon
noticing your sins
(and trust in full
forgiveness)

*St. Theophan the
Hermit (Part 2, page
89)

"To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of

righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.” (Isaiah 61:3)

“Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, So that no one went through you, I will make you an eternal excellence, a joy of many generations.” (Isaiah 60:15)

“Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and will not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore.” (Isaiah 54:4)

Yes, my son, you can be sure of that. Be sure that every wound will be a cause of glory for which God will compensate you several folds. It will be a blessing for you; for the hurt that Joseph experienced by being sold as a slave was for his good and the good of his family.

I said: I will forgive, father, for the sake of the Lord Jesus. I will await his promises until he heals my feelings. Now I really feel that a heavy burden has been removed off of my heart.

He said: Now, there remains the third point in the peace of sunset.

I said: What is it, father?

He said: The third point is forgiveness for the daily incidents.

I said: What is that?

He said: After self-forgiveness and forgiveness of others in the past, there is no reason to pile up again. Let us forgive on a daily basis.

I said: How?

He said: Every day remember every sin, every fall, every error, and repent. Feel remorse and ask for forgiveness and accept forgiveness from Christ.

Saint Shenouda the Anchorite said: do not keep you sins overnight.

I said: What does that mean?

He said: It means that you should not go to bed with the Lord Jesus disappointed in you. Saint Shenouda went on to say “let everyone of us sit with himself in the evening, see what he’d done throughout the day and repent”. Thus one would sleep peaceful at mind and reconciled with God.

I said: What about confession, father?

He said: Of course we will speak about the importance and benefit of confession. One guy asked Fr. Dawood Lamei: when is sin forgiven, after repentance or after confession or after having holy Eucharist?

I said: What did he say?

He said: Fr. Dawood said, "Forgiveness is an important issue and thus has several gates. For God makes forgiveness abundant: repentance gives forgiveness; confession gives forgiveness; and the Holy Eucharist gives forgiveness."

Is there a day where one does not sin, or is there a human being who passes one day without sinning?

I said: Every day I sin; and I think all people are like that, even small sins.

He said: Indeed, son, we all sin. Therefore, offer repentance, every day, every hour. Don't be fooled by the devil's tricks and wicked ways. The church taught us that every day before going to bed, we say in the Compline Prayer "Lord, all our sins which we committed against You in this day, whether in deeds or in words or in thoughts or through all senses, please remit and forgive us, for the sake of Your holy

name.” We say all our sins, not some or most or the majority of our sins. We say all, and we mean all. We ask our Lord Jesus to remit and forgive. So, does he really remit and forgive, or is it just talk?

I said: He certainly forgives.

He said: Listen to this story. A student from Upper Egypt was admitted by the Tertiary Admissions Center to the Faculty of Engineering, Cairo University. He had a colleague from the same town who was 3 years older than him. In Upper Egypt, relatives of that older student beseeched him to take care of the freshman student, to show him the way and to introduce him to people. He said: he’s my brother, don’t worry about him. In the first week, in a strange land and distressed by being away from his family, the freshman started to smoke. His friend exploited this weakness and began to blackmail him. Every day he would ask him to buy him something, once dinner, once to make photocopies, ... etc. Every time he asked for his money back, the other would tell him: have you forgotten about the cigarettes? Although the freshman smoked for not more than five days and then quit, his friend

went on blackmailing him; for the family of the freshman trusted him. They contacted him more than they did with their own son to make sure he was well.

On the first day of vacation, the 6th of October, both went to their hometown. The next day, they both met outside. The older said to his friend “come on, invite us to dinner”. He said: let each one eat at his home. The older one said: have you forgotten or what? In Cairo communications happen over the phone. Here we are face to face. Under the

O Jerusalem, wash
your heart from
wickedness, That you
may be saved. How
long shall your evil
thoughts lodge
within you?
(Jeremiah 4:14)

pressure and fear, the freshman invited him. However, he went out of the restaurant with one resolution, namely: to tell his father regardless of the consequences. When he went home, he waited for his dad to return from work. He sat next to him and said: can I tell you something. He said: go ahead, son. He said: when I went to Cairo, I began to smoke. His father was disappointed and said: did I send you to Cairo to learn or to smoke? He answered quickly: I quit long ago. That was

during the first few days. That's why I came to tell you, dad. He said: did you really quit? He assured him that he did saying: of course dad, otherwise I would not have dared to tell you. Here, the father went on to advise his son giving him a long lecture about the dangers of smoking and how harmful it is to the health, and that it could cause death. He asked him to take care of himself and of his studies. At the end he said, encouragingly: I am glad you came to tell me. You may come to tell me about anything you do. Here, the son was encouraged and told him: there is one more thing, father. The father said: go on, son (worried in his heart that his son might have smoked weed). The son said: our neighbor did so and so to me. He told him all that he had done, including the incident that happened that day. His father said decisively: from now on depend on yourself. Stay away from him as long as he is so abusive. Just take care of yourself. The freshman said: so, you're not angry with me, dad. He said: of course not. What matters most is to refrain from doing the wrong. I am pleased with you that you tell me everything. From now on, consider me your brother and friend. As to the other boy, deal with him

decisively. Now you know everything, don't you? He said: yes, dad, I don't need him anymore. His dad said: you have to be strict with him. If he ever tells you I'll tell your dad, tell him go ahead, and I'll handle him. Now, the son took a sigh of relief and felt that he'd been freed of a heavy burden; that he burned the card which his friend used against him by confessing to his father.

In the evening he went out, and met his older friend by chance. The friend greeted him and said: why do you look unhappy? I won't ask you for dinner; just buy us a drink. The son said decisively: listen, from now on each pays for himself. If you do not like it we can go different ways. "What's wrong, did someone influence you or what?" "This is it, this is how we'll deal with each other, if you like it." "Have you forgotten yourself? You'll see what I'll do to you." He answered, serenely: do whatever you like. He went hastily to the freshman's house. He knocked on the door. The father opened and greeted him. "Welcome back, please come in." After he sat down he said: there's something I wanted to tell you,

uncle. The father said: of course. He said: I had a secret to tell you. In Cairo, your son began to smoke. The man shook his head carelessly. The boy was frustrated and said: I don't mean anything, I was just worried about him. If he smokes today, then what will he do when he's older. The father said to him in a strict tone: he told me. He told me about everything. Here, the student understood everything, and withdrew feeling ashamed of himself.

The Book of Revelation says about Satan that he is the accuser of our brethren day and night (Revelation 13). When you commit a sin he writes it on an indictment sheet. When you

judge someone, for instance, Satan stands before God saying "This guy judged another. It is written 'do not judge'. You are a just God. Will Satan be right or wrong?

You'd better remorse deeply; however, do not let such remorse, no matter how deep it is, make you doubt forgiveness.

Forgiveness has been fully prepared beforehand, and all the sin deeds were torn on the cross.

Saint Theophan the Hermit

I said: He's right; because I sinned.

He said: But if you tell your Father every day about your sins, Satan would stand before God and begin to accuse you saying "this guy did so and so", and God would not reply to him. Satan would go right and left saying the commandment says so and so, where's justice, he deserves to be punished. Then, God would reply saying "he told me everything". Then, the card in Satan's hand would be burnt.

How great is the guarantee that God has given us for being in this world amid temptations. Some might fall after their sins were forgiven (in Baptism). Therefore, we have to do what we can, which is to confess our situation every day as it is, so that we would be healed by the Christ who does not change.

Saint Augustine

Therefore, you have to tell the Lord Jesus every day about your sins, hidden or apparent, those that you think are simple and those that are grave. When you confess them and repent,

Satan cannot accuse you for them and you'll be liberated from your sin. Just repent, and the card will be burnt.

He said: Do not forget also, within the daily forgiveness, to forgive others. Forgive all those who trespass against you, so you could pray and say forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others.

I said: But wouldn't that affect my personality and dealing with people, father?

He said: We are talking about inner peace, i.e. the inner aspect of dealings. One can pretend to love people while on the inside there is hatred, grudge and despising. This is what I am talking about: not to keep a grudge or hatred in your heart. As to wisdom in dealing with people, this is another story that we'll address in detail when we talk about moderation. I could be strict with my son or with one of my kids in Sunday school or with a friend at college, and not hate or despise him. I might differ with someone, or avoid someone in my dealings, but not hate or hold a grudge against him. This is a long story.

But now, just focus on your inside, on your heartily forgiveness of others – everybody else, offer repentance day

by day and accept forgiveness – so that the sorrows and sins would not accumulate, and you'll enjoy the peace of Jesus Christ. Remember to feed your soul with the Bible and to renew the general proxy so you could keep growing in your spiritual life.

I said: I will be keen to do that, father.

Here, my father and I went our ways with a promise to meet again. I was so happy feeling that a burden was lifted off of my chest, and that I've become a true Christian. How good is forgiveness!

Order this series from:

-God's Love House at Zeitoun – Egypt

01285625314

or

-Kings Pharmacy Bishoy Armanios 33 park avenue

Newark, New Jersey 07104 Tel; 917-794-1733