

How Much Is Required?

by Carl McMurray

And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' 28 But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee. "29 Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not. " 30 And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." 31 But he said emphatically, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." Mark 14:27-31

How many times must we forgive another? That was the question put to Jesus by His disciples on one occasion, "Seven times?" Peter asked. "Seventy times seven!" was Jesus' reply. How many times? "Seven times in one day!" Jesus taught them on another occasion.

There seemed to be no limit to the level of forgiveness Jesus demanded of His disciples. And likewise, no limit to that forgiveness which He offered to others. In the passage from Mark fourteen above, the Master plainly points out the failure that was going to belong to Peter before the night was over. Jesus knew Peter was going to fail, told him he was going to fail, and listened to Peter's objections to that failure, all the while knowing better. Jesus set the bar pretty high in the area of compassion and forgiveness, and was willing to lead the way and demonstrate it in His own dealings with men.

We live in a world broken by sin. Trust is broken. Words are broken. Promises, homes, lives, emotions and more have all been broken and desperately need healing. Healing requires compassion, patience, and forgiveness. Jesus Christ showed us that it was possible to offer these things, even in the worst of circumstances. Not only was/is it possible, but he offers these things Himself, to every man. He cleanses compassion and purifies forgiveness in the blood of His own sacrifice and offers these tender mercies to you and me and all others who would accept them.

People in our culture today are looking for what Jesus has to offer. Not just salvation eternally, but healing from the brokenness in their lives now. And the only way the Master has of reaching people with His healing touch is through the lives of Christians. It is up to Christians to exhibit compassion and patience, tenderness and forgiveness and by so doing bring healing to lives broken by sin. How much should we forgive? Seven times in one day, or seventy times seven times. Or put another way, we should be as willing to offer compassion as we expect the Lord to be when we bring our sinful lives to Him, i.e., over and over and over.

