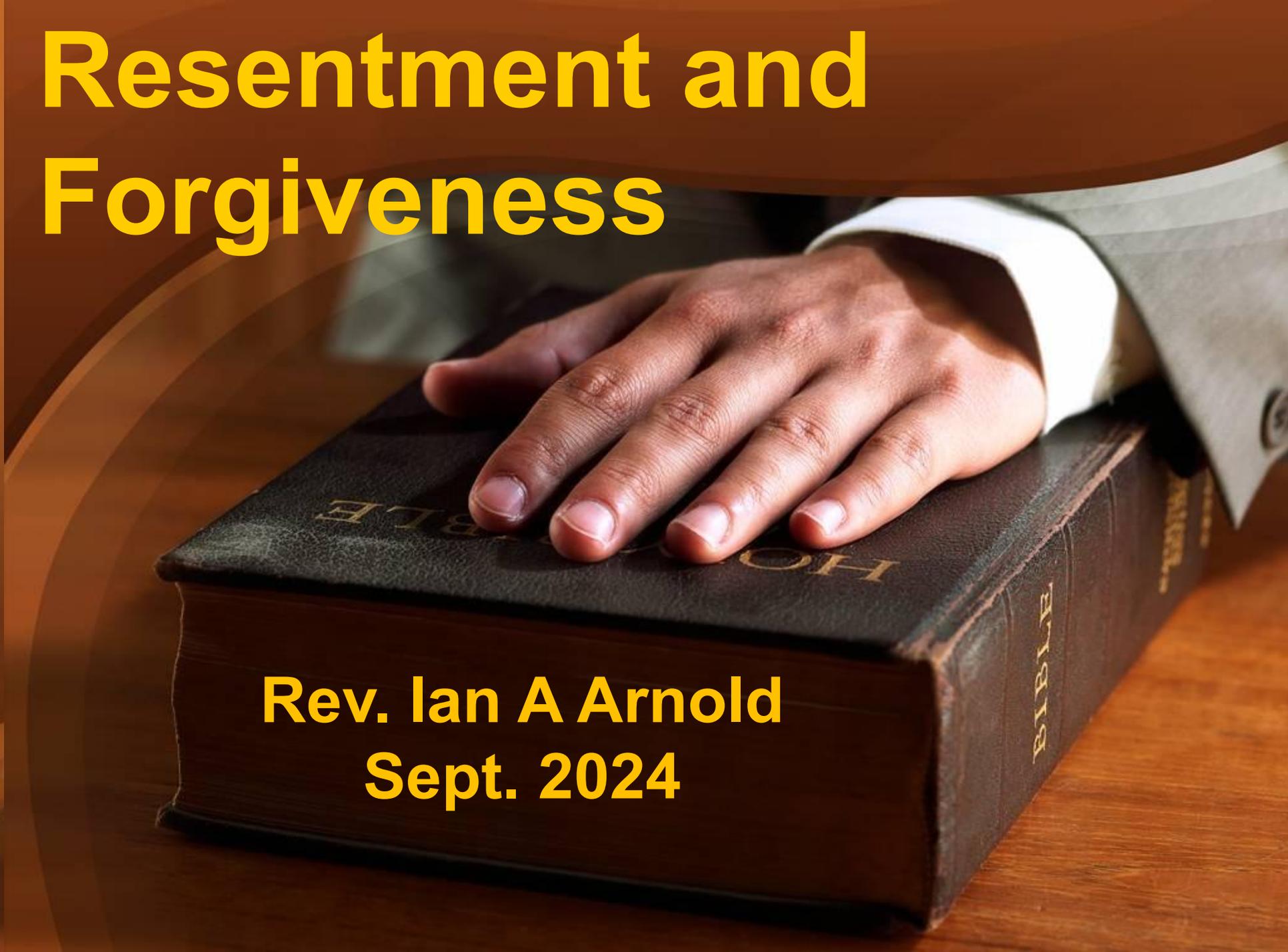
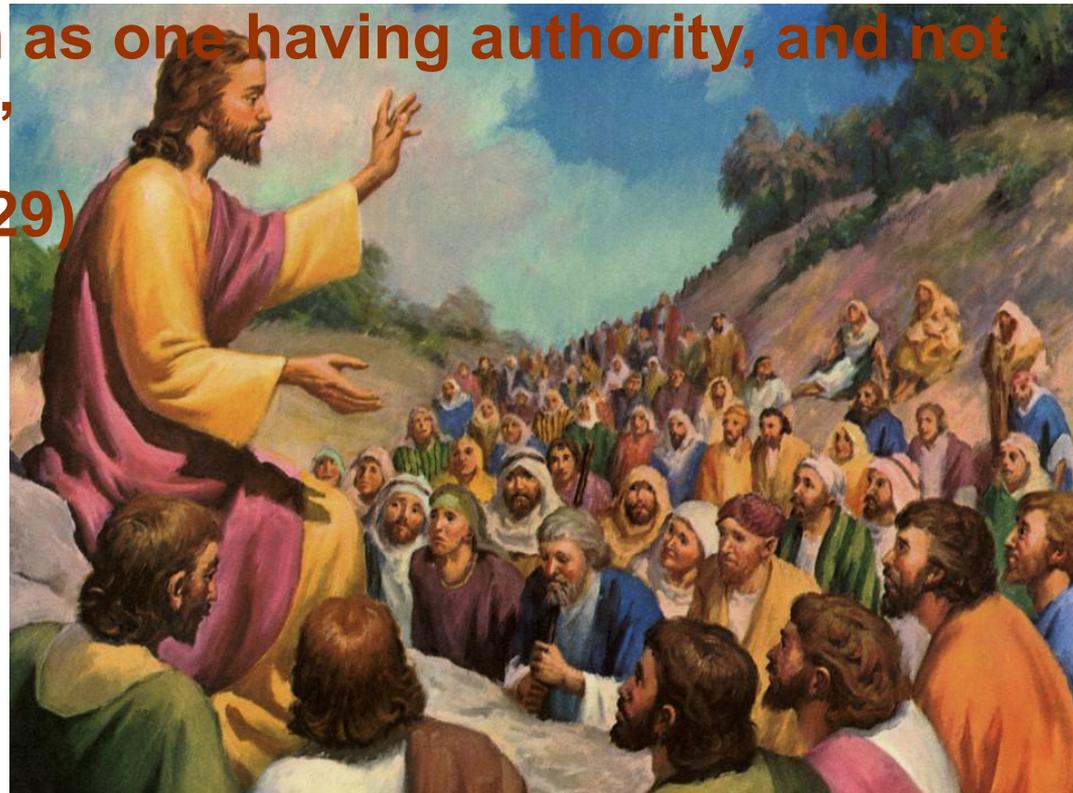


# Resentment and Forgiveness

A close-up photograph of a person's hand, wearing a white shirt cuff, resting on a dark brown leather Bible. The Bible is lying flat on a wooden surface. The word 'BIBLE' is embossed on the spine and the cover. The background is a warm, brown gradient with a subtle circular pattern.

**Rev. Ian A Arnold**  
**Sept. 2024**

In Chapters 5 to 7 of Matthew's Gospels we have what is widely referred to as Jesus's "Sermon on the Mount". In this sermon Jesus taught the way a follower – a Christian – **should aim to live**. What He taught was revolutionary and it is no wonder that at the end of it, it is said "the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."  
(Chapter 7:28, 29)



The Greek word which is translated as “astonished” is a word which carries the meaning of being “struck” in a really powerful way. What the people had been listening to struck them with a mighty force. **Jesus had just said things they had never heard before.** It was like a clap of thunder.

One of the many reasons why what Jesus had said had such an impact on the people was what He had taught concerning **Forgiveness.**

We can easily overlook the fact, or not know, that at that time the Old Testament maxim, of “as it has been done to you so you have a right to do to the offender” was still a governing principle in the way people lived their lives. The law was, “life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.” (Exodus 21:23-26). It was primitive justice,



Old Testament times were not times renowned for pity and compassion. Far from it. And for this reason there are people today who are quite uncomfortable reading parts of the Old Testament where the shedding of blood, revenge killings and the absolute slaughter of non-Jews were taken to be wholly acceptable and the way it needed to be.

Jesus was wholly educated in Old Testament Scriptures and was totally aware of such teaching. But, hallmark and distinguishing feature of the Jewish Church, then failing in its role and purpose, as they were, these Old Testament teachings would not be the hallmark of the Christian Church He had begun to establish.



Eye for eye  
Tooth for tooth

I invite you to again listen to some of the things He taught.

Again,

“You have heard that it was said “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I (Jesus) tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.”

“You have heard that it was said ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy’. But I (Jesus) say to you, **love your enemies bless those who curse you**, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who despitefully use you and persecute you, that you be the sons of your father in heaven.” (Matthew Chapter 5: verses 39 & 39 and 41 & 42).

Can you picture in your mind the disciples of



**This was extraordinary. Jesus was declaring the end of the old “revenge” mentality.**

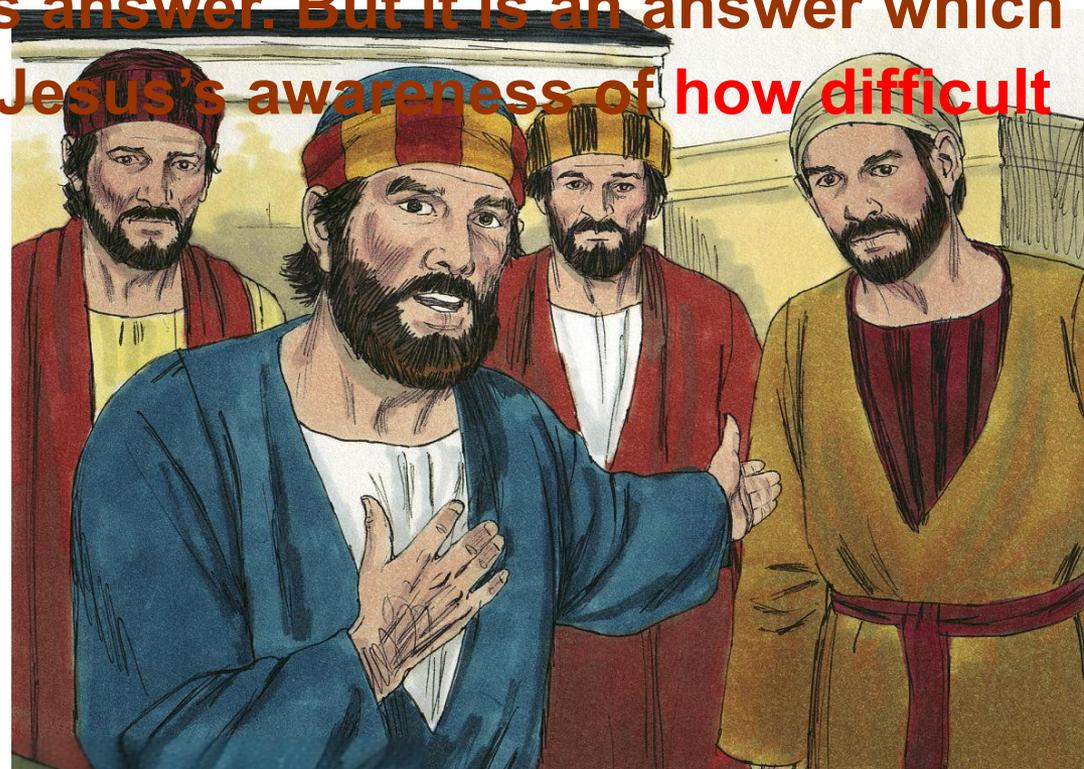
**But what He said didn’t end there. He went on to challenge His listeners about the need to forgive. No wonder they were astonished. And all must have wondered about how radically different this new teaching was.**

**Within what we refer to as “The Lord’s Prayer”, also part of His great sermon, Jesus incorporated words about forgiveness, “And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.” And, of all the different things asked for in the Lord’s Prayer, it was this one, about forgiveness, that Jesus singled out for further comment. “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also**



Later in Jesus's ministry "Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' But Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to **seventy times seven.**'" (Matthew 18:21, 22).

Peter and the other disciples must have been stunned by this answer. But it is an answer which conveys to us Jesus's awareness of **how difficult we find it to forgive.**



Our natural and unregenerate reaction to an offence is **hurt and resentment** and, in many cases it triggers **a desire for revenge**. If someone has been unfair and hurtful evil spirits awaken thoughts within us as to how we can be unfair and hurtful in retaliation. That's the lower self within us talking. But **the higher self, now awakened by angelic spirits, wants us to focus on forgiveness**. And so we are torn between the two courses of action. Do we look for an opportunity to do to another person what, unjustly, unfairly, hurtfully, and maybe deceitfully they have done to us? Or do we choose what seems the much harder alternative, to forgive that person?

But now comes the question, What is forgiveness?



Some people urge that forgiveness is forgetting. But No, the teaching in the Writings makes it clear that everything that happens in our lives is impressed on our memory and whilst the memory of an incident may fade it can be instantly reawakened, in certain circumstances.

It is also urged that forgiveness depends on an apology from the offender. But this is to say that it is acceptable to harbour resentment until such an apology is offered, if it ever is. And if an apology isn't forthcoming then the person against whom the offence was committed lives with their resentment, eating away at them within. **They make themselves a victim.**



In New Testament Greek the word which is translated “forgive” is a word which means “**to pardon**”, “**to leave behind**”, “**to let go**”.

But how do we do this? And why, many times, is it so difficult to do this?

Firstly, our natural and unregenerate, tendency is, unfortunately, **to jump to a judgement about the other person. We fail to separate the deed from the doer.** We read into the offence something sinister and intended, when yet it may have nothing sinister within it and have never been intended. This is the same as saying to ourselves, “That was a really bad thing you did so, therefore, you are a very bad person.”



Secondly, we can be much too ready to **withhold mercy**. Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” (Matthew 5:7). We allow ourselves to rush into a reaction when it would be far better to withhold any reaction or comment, giving ourselves the opportunity to bring to mind that the offender may have been tired, or be under pressure, or have sickness at home, or maybe had an accident on the way to work. Clearly, and from the teaching in the Writings, it is a much more preferable path to follow, to excuse the errors and falsities in others (Secrets of Heaven 1079); even going so far as **putting a good interpretation** on what has been said or done. (Secrets of Heaven 1085). At least for the moment.

**This doesn't mean dismissing any offence as if it hadn't mattered.** But it does mean waiting for an



There is a lovely passage in the Writings about “being alerted by the Divine” and how this leads to “a feeling of compassion being aroused”. (Secrets of Heaven 6737). If we are to be “alerted by the Divine” then it is just so important to **hand challenging episodes of hurt and dismay caused by others to the Lord**. Prayer is so important here.

Thirdly, it is important that we keep in mind how inclined we are, especially when we have been hurt or offended, **to exaggerate the faults and shortcomings of others**. Also part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye.” (Matthew 7:3)

Fourthly, we cannot forgive from ourselves. **Forgiveness is a gift from the Lord which flows down into us as we make room to receive it.** As we have



The teaching in the Writings is that **“Forgiving is regarding someone not from the point of view of evil but from the point of view of good.”** (Secrets of Heaven 7697).

Now, what this calls for from us is to engage in a process which, eventually, enables us to think of that person who has wronged us, and of the event (what they said or did) **from a very different perspective.**

\*It calls for us to **relinquish**, with the Lord’s help, our hurt, or our embarrassment or our anger or our disappointment.

\*It also calls for us to **address** the issue; the hurt; the unfairness; with the other person, not judgmentally but from the point of view of how healing can take place



Notice, this is a process. If the hurt has been very deep, it will take time. But it is what the Lord commands and every command He gave we need to **strive to obey**. If we can't forgive, then we leave a block in place, and the Lord cannot forgive us.



**Years ago I listened to an interview with the author of a book titled, “Secrets of the Red Lantern”, Pauline Win. Mrs Win had arrived in Australia as a five year old refugee from Vietnam, and in her book she wrote – amongst other things – of her father’s brutality and explosive temper, of his violence and unrelenting demands and expectations of his children. While once resenting him, and bitter towards him, she had come to see him differently, not from evil any more but from good. She could see it all, now, in the context of Confucian philosophy, the patriarchal family structure, her father’s own upbringing (which she had come to learn about), all that it meant to be refugees in a foreign country, his need for his children to succeed, etc.**



**If, and when, we are struggling to forgive someone, let us not underestimate what the Lord promises.** “Prove me now in this, says the LORD of hosts, If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such a blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.” (Malachi 3: 10).

**We need to ask ourselves these questions:**

◆ **Who are we to withhold forgiveness when we are so readily forgiven by the Lord?**

◆ **Who are we to withhold forgiveness when we ourselves make countless mistakes and commit offenses against other people, almost certainly more than we realize?**

◆ **Do we wish to make ourselves a victim of**



The reality is of friendships broken because of unforgiveness; of families torn apart because of unforgiveness; of resentments that trickle down generations. **It doesn't have to be like this.**

Jesus said, "A new Commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you love one another." (John 13:34) It is an incredible example He gave us. The love which energized Jesus was a love to bring people to a better place, spiritually. And that remains the focus of His love today. **In all our dealings with one another, and following this sublime example, we need to aim, also, at bringing people to a better place, spiritually.** And we are not going to do this by instant, angry reactions or by giving way to resentment. We are to resist the promptings of our unregenerate proprium. We are, indeed, to turn the



Remember: **it is a command to love one another.** And by extrapolation it is a command to forgive people who offend, hurt, embarrass or betray us. And what the Lord commands is not to be set aside, as if we know better. It is almost certain that we have all known times when we haven't especially wanted to obey something that the Lord commands. And **this is where self-compulsion is required.** We may not feel like extending forgiveness, but we need to compel ourselves to do what the Lord commands. **His commands are not a choice! They are an obligation.**

Next time we are hurt or offended by someone, let us ask ourselves, "How can I handle this situation in such a way as to make it possible **for heaven to enter in and for the door against hell to be kept**



## Ephesians 4:32

**“Be kind to one another,  
tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just  
as God in Christ forgave you.”**

**Amen**



# Readings :

## Genesis 45:1-8

### Joseph Revealed to His Brothers

**1**Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, “Make everyone go out from me!” So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. **2**And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard *it*.

**3**Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I *am* Joseph; does my father still live?” But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence. **4**And Joseph said to his brothers, “Please come near to me.” So they came near. Then he said: “I *am* Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. **5**But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. **6**For these two years the famine *has been* in the land, and *there are* still five years in which *there will be* neither plowing nor harvesting. **7**And God sent me before you to preserve a [a]posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by



## John 8:1-12

The Lord's forgiveness of the woman taken in

**1**But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. **2**Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. **3**Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, **4**they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. **5**Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" **6**This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with *His* finger, as though He did not hear.

**7**So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." **8**And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. **9**Then those who heard *it*, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest *even* to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. **10**When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

**11**She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither



## **Secrets of Heaven 904:2**

**[2] The presence of the Lord is predicated according to the state of love toward the neighbor and of faith in which the man is. In love toward the neighbor the Lord is present, because He is in all good; but not so much in faith, so called, without love. Faith without love and charity is a separated or disjointed thing. Wherever there is conjunction there must be a conjoining medium, which is nothing else than love and charity, as must be evident to all from the fact that the Lord is merciful to everyone, and loves everyone, and wills to make everyone happy to eternity. He therefore who is not in such love that he is merciful to others, loves them, and wills to make them happy, cannot be conjoined with the Lord, because he is unlike Him and not at all in His image. To look to the Lord by faith, as they say, and at the same time to hate the neighbor, is not only to stand afar off, but is also to have the abyss of hell between**



THE END

