

Loosed

Matthew 16:19

*“Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven;
and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”*

What an awesome responsibility! Can you believe it, that God would put into motion a command that brings us to the edge of either engaging heavenly forgiveness, or heavenly shame? What do I mean by that?

Can you see it—for me, it’s plain as daylight! God gives us a choice—to forgive, or not to forgive. When you get in an argument with another, who is going to ask for forgiveness first? Who will offer an apology first? In *Matthew 16:19*, God puts it on the line for us...either forgive others here on earth, or these same “unforgivenesses” will be “bound in heaven”!

I just got in an argument over the phone with a friend. I’m sitting here writing about how I must forgive, *and I’m sitting here writing*, instead of going to the phone and asking for forgiveness. But my bull-headedness sometimes keeps me from being the first to ask for forgiveness—to apologize for an offense. Yes, I’m sitting here writing while...hmm, I’m going to end this ugly feeling and go apologize...

...well, making THAT call feels much better. I now understand the issue we were arguing about much better, after apologizing, and hearing the details of the situation at hand, in his heart and mind, that caused his anger. I feel **loosed** as well as “**bound**” to have a better relationship with him. It is so simple, and yet calls for bravery, to be the first to apologize. Like usual, though...I was the only one to apologize—(because my feelings were hurt in the argument too)—but this is the nature of apologizing first. Often, any grievance I may have had goes unacknowledged and forgotten. This has happened to me many times. But, I am willing to let it go and know that I did my best to rectify the situation.

If I am interpreting *Matthew 16:19* correctly, indeed, God has given us a huge responsibility to apologize, to forgive, to let go of resentment and move on. It is a blessed proclamation because it “forces” us to really think about how we hold onto our anger, grudges and resentments. It’s like grasping our favorite ice cream cone—delicious in our self-righteousness and tasty with the temptation to hold onto the feelings of being a victim—of having been used, abused or insulted.

Yet, many times, it takes time and distance to reach a forgiving state, and we must not rush the process. Sure, I just apologized to my friend on a simple matter—but what about the monstrous matters of a death or injury? I take my example from the surviving families of those nine African American churchgoers lost to a shooter in Charleston, South Carolina in 2015. They forgave the killer almost immediately, in light of the example of Jesus, forgiving those who were crucifying Him. Wow! Could I ever do that?

I can barely end a squabble in my own life—taking me half an hour to enter into a place of forgiveness. For those grieving families, it took bravery, humility, depth of belief in God, and an absolute belief—if I may venture to assume—the belief that *“whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”* I thank God that we have a God who challenges us to reach toward our limits and brings us to the places of becoming the best people we can be! Bound or loosed...which will it be for you?

by Rich Melcher