



INSIDE

VERSE OF THE WEEK

Ephesians 4:32 3

ABOUT

Capitol Ministries. 8

Knowing Jesus: Forgiveness



Rembrandt – “The Return of the Prodigal Son”

FORGIVENESS IS AN INDISPENSABLE character quality requisite of every legislator, staff member and lobbyist. Forgiving and gracious people are attractive. Given the competitive and combative environment of lawmaking — especially in an election year where many false things will be said about you — it is easy to end up carrying baggage. The problem is that the baggage is rotten and it stinks up your whole life! Not only does a lack of forgiveness cloud your relationship with God, it’s hard for others to hang around those who tend to “stench-up” the buildings. Accordingly, let’s examine what the Scriptures teach regarding the formulation, strengthening and enactment of this essential quality: Your ability to forgive and forget. After all, is not characteristic forgiveness the way Jesus has dealt with you?


Ralph Drollinger

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Weekly Bible Study During Session

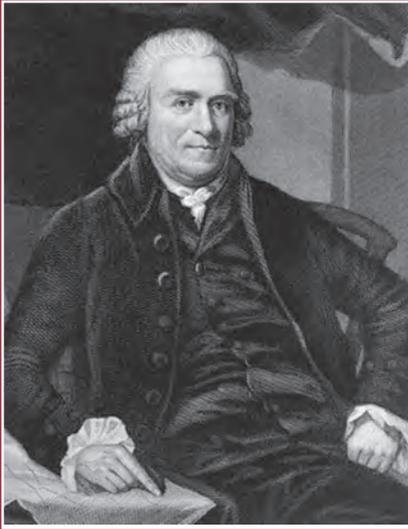
SENATE: Dirksen Basement: 8:00 AM Tuesdays. *Hot Breakfast Served.*

CONGRESS: Capitol H324: 5:30 PM Monday or Tuesday Evenings. *After First Votes Back.*





Samuel Adams



"I conceive we cannot better express ourselves than by humbly supplicating the Supreme Ruler of the world . . . that the confusions that are and have been among the nations may be overruled by the promoting and speedily bringing in the holy and happy period when the kingdoms of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ may be everywhere established, and the people willingly bow to the scepter of Him who is the Prince of Peace."

— Samuel Adams, Signer of the Declaration of Independence; Father of the American Revolution; Ratifier of the U.S. Constitution; Governor of Massachusetts.

From a *Fast Day Proclamation* issued by Governor Samuel Adams, Massachusetts, March 20, 1797; see also *Samuel Adams, The Writings of Samuel Adams*, Harry Alonzo Cushing, editor (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908), Vol. IV, p. 407, from his proclamation of March 20, 1797.

I. THE MANDATE OF FORGIVENESS

A. WHAT WAS THE INNER ATTITUDE OF JESUS WHEN HE UNDERWENT THE AGONY OF THE CROSS ACCORDING TO LUKE 23:34?

But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.

Compare both the degrees of injustice and the presence of a forgiving attitude which Jesus exhibited in comparison to your reaction to someone who may have wronged you.

B. IN MARK 11:25 WHAT BENEFIT INURES TO THE BELIEVER RELATIVE TO HIS OR HER OBEDIENCE TO THE MANDATE TO FORGIVE?

"Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions."

C. WHAT IS THE UNDERLYING MOTIVE FOR NOT FORGIVING SOMEONE ACCORDING TO ROMANS 12:19?

Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

How should we respond to our enemies according to verse 20?

"BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY,

GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD."

What does God promise in this passage when we are faithful to His mandate to forgive?

Paul is most likely referring to an ancient Egyptian custom wherein those who desired to display their contrition in public would carry a pan of burning coals atop their head outwardly representing the pain of their guilt and shame.

Write out Proverbs 25:21-22 below: *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.*

IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM. ROMANS 12:20

D. WHAT WAS THE INTENT OF JESUS' ANSWER TO PETER AS RECORDED BY MATTHEW IN 18:21-22?

Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

E. ON A SCALE OF ONE TO TEN, TEN BEING THE MOST FORGIVING PERSON, HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS



CHARACTER QUALITY IN YOUR LIFE? WHY?

- F. **THOUGHT QUESTION: IF YOUR ENEMY SUES YOU IN CIVIL COURT, OUR COURTS DEMAND THAT YOU RESPOND. IS SUCH A RESPONSE A “LACK OF FORGIVENESS”? CONFER WITH ROMANS 13:2 IN FORMULATING YOUR ANSWER.**

Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

II. THE MOTIVES OF FORGIVENESS

- A. **RETURN TO MATTHEW 18. READ VERSES 23 TO 33. WHAT IS THE GRAND LESSON WE LEARN AS TO WHY THE BELIEVER SHOULD BE SUPER-COMPELLED TO FORGIVE?**

“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’ And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ So his fellow slave fell to the ground

and began to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. Then summoning him, his lord said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’

- B. **THE ABOVE IS SUMMARIZED IN EPHESIANS 4:32. WHAT TWO OTHER WORDS ARE USED HERE WHICH FURTHER CHARACTERIZE A FORGIVING SPIRIT? DO THESE WORDS DEPICT YOU?**

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

- C. **READ COLOSSIANS 3:12-13.**

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

What additional five motives are revealed (in 3:12b) that should motivate the believer to be characterized by forgiveness? Explain why for each.

- D. **WHAT ADDITIONAL CHARACTERISTIC IS LISTED IN 3:13A THAT**

♥ VERSE OF THE WEEK

EPHESIANS 4:32

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.



Be gracious. Forgive. Let your grace point back to the Savior.



Robert Treat Paine



"I believe the Bible to be the written word of God and to contain in it the whole rule of faith and manners."

— Robert Treat Paine, Military Chaplain; Signer of the Declaration of Independence; Attorney General of Massachusetts; Judge.

Robert Treat Paine, *The Papers of Robert Treat Paine*, Stephen T. Riley and Edward W. Hanson, editors (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1992), Vol. I, p. 49, Robert Treat Paine's Confession of Faith, 1749.

DEPICTS A FORGIVING SPIRIT? EXPLAIN WHY PER 3:13B.

III. THE MEANS OF FORGIVENESS

One of God's attributes is that He loves even His enemies. This universal love is displayed in His indiscriminate blessing bestowed on all of mankind. Theologically, this is referred to as common grace. It then follows, for the believer to reflect more and more the attributes of God, he or she must be similarly characterized.

A. THE BELIEVER IS TO GROW IN FORGIVENESS. IT IS A SOMETIMES RIGOROUS DISCIPLINE HE OR SHE MUST CHOOSE. HOW DO YOU SEE THAT FACT ILLUSTRATED IN THE FOLLOWING PASSAGES?

1. Matthew 5:44

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

2. Romans 12:20

"BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD."

3. Colossians 3:13 (Again, the last phrase).

Bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

4. Genesis 45:5-11

Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years,

and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. You shall live in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children and your flocks and your herds and all that you have. There I will also provide for you, for there are still five years of famine to come, and you and your household and all that you have would be impoverished."

IV. THE MECHANISM OF FORGIVENESS

A thorough study of biblical forgiveness would not be complete without examining the means by which a sinning believer is restored to the body of Christ. In other words if a believer is truly living in sin (not just gossiped about or accused of), his re-association is conditioned by his repentance. This is borne out in the following passages.

A. READ MATTHEW 18:15-20.

"If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.



For where two or three have gathered together in my name, I am there in their midst.

What is the four step procedure God has ordained relative to an unrepentant Christian?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

(A side note of importance is worth mention here. What is the context of “Where two or three are gathered in my name”? This passage is often quoted out of context, as if this is a formula for effective prayer. It is not about prayer, it is about discipline.)

B. IS OUR ASSOCIATION WITH ANOTHER BELIEVER CONDITIONED BY HIS REPENTANCE?

C. READ ALL OF 1CORINTHIANS 5.

It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst. For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but

with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.

In an added sense is it possible to forgive and disassociate simultaneously?

Consider 2Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15 and Galatians 6:1, respectively, in formulating your answer.

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.

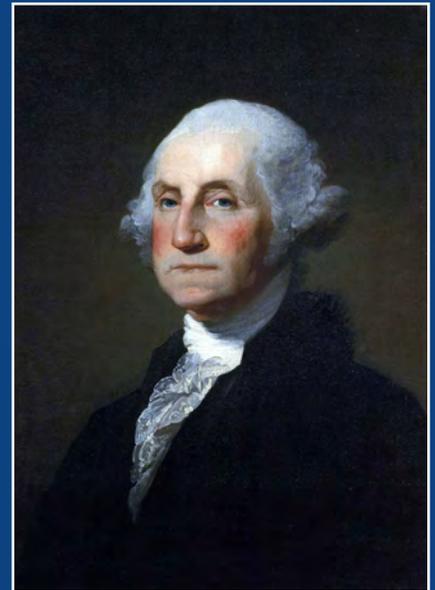
If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

V. THE MEN OF FORGIVENESS

A. READ GENESIS 37:16-38.

George Washington



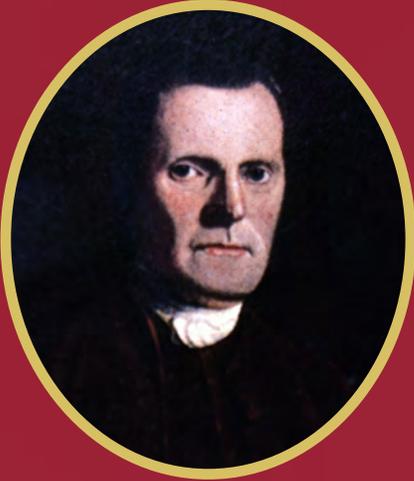
“I now make it my earnest prayer that God would... most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of the mind which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion.”

— George Washington, first President of the United States; “Father of his Country”; the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War; President of the Constitutional Convention; Judge.

George Washington, The Last Official Address of His Excellency George Washington to the Legislature of the United States (Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin, 1783), p. 12; see also *The New Annual Register or General Repository of History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1783* (London: G. Robinson, 1784), p. 150.



Roger Sherman



"[I]t is the duty of all to acknowledge that the Divine Law which requires us to love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves, on pain of eternal damnation, is Holy, just, and good. . . . The revealed law of God is the rule of our duty."

— Roger Sherman, Signer of the Declaration of Independence; Signer of the Constitution; "Master Builder of the Constitution"; Judge; Framers of the Bill of Rights; U.S. Senator.

Correspondence Between Roger Sherman and Samuel Hopkins (Worcester, MA: Charles Hamilton, 1889), p. 10, from Roger Sherman to Samuel Hopkins, June 28, 1790.

He said, "I am looking for my brothers; please tell me where they are pasturing the flock." Then the man said, "They have moved from here; for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan. When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death. They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer! Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, 'A wild beast devoured him.' Then let us see what will become of his dreams!" But Reuben heard this and rescued him out of their hands and said, "Let us not take his life." Reuben further said to them, "Shed no blood. Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hands, to restore him to his father. So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him; and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it. Then they sat down to eat a meal. And as they raised their eyes and looked, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing aromatic gum and balm and myrrh, on their way to bring them down to Egypt. Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers listened to him. Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they pulled him up and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. Thus they brought Joseph into Egypt. Now Reuben returned to the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit; so he tore his garments. He returned to his brothers and said, "The boy is not there; as for me, where am I to go?" So they took Joseph's tunic, and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the tunic in the blood; and they sent the varicolored tunic and brought it to their father and said, "We found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son's tunic or not." Then he examined it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely

been torn to pieces!" So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, "Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son." So his father wept for him. Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard.

What did Joseph's brothers do to him?

Review Genesis 45:5-11.

Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. You shall live in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children and your flocks and your herds and all that you have. There I will also provide for you, for there are still five years of famine to come, and you and your household and all that you have would be impoverished.'"

Read Genesis 50:20 and 22.

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. . . . Now Joseph stayed in Egypt, he and his father's household, and Joseph lived one hundred and ten years.

What was Joseph's response? During those in-between years, do you think he ever



struggled with forgiveness? How strong was he in “choosing to forgive”?

B. READ 1SAMUEL 24:1-11.

Now when Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, saying, “Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi.” Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel and went to seek David and his men in front of the Rocks of the Wild Goats. He came to the sheepfolds on the way, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the inner recesses of the cave. The men of David said to him, “Behold, this is the day of which the Lord said to you, ‘Behold; I am about to give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you.’” Then David arose and cut off the edge of Saul’s robe secretly. It came about afterward that David’s conscience bothered him because he had cut off the edge of Saul’s robe. So he said to his men, “Far be it from me because of the Lord that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord’s anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is the Lord’s anointed.” David persuaded his men with these words and did not allow them to rise up against Saul. And Saul arose, left the cave, and went on his way. Now afterward David arose and went out of the cave and called after Saul, saying, “My lord the king!” And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground and prostrated himself. David said to Saul, “Why do you listen to the words of men, saying, ‘Behold, David seeks to harm you’? Behold, this day your eyes have seen that the Lord had given you today into my hand in the cave, and some said to kill you, but my eye had pity on you; and I said, ‘I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord’s anointed.’ Now, my father, see! Indeed, see the edge of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the edge of your robe and did not kill you, know and perceive that there is no evil or rebellion in my hands, and I have not sinned

against you, though you are lying in wait for my life to take it.

What was David’s response to the injustice Saul brought upon his life?

C. READ ACTS 7:54-60.

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” Having said this, he fell asleep.

What was Stephen’s response to those who stoned him?

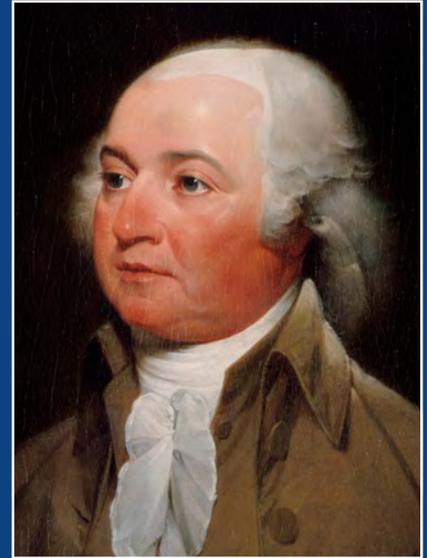
D. IN 2TIMOTHY 4:16, WHAT WAS PAUL’S ATTITUDE TOWARD THOSE WHO DISAPPOINTED HIM?

At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them.

What was Paul’s thinking pattern that enabled him to gain the strength to forgive according to 2Timothy 4:17?

But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion’s mouth.

John Adams



“Suppose a nation in some distant region should take the Bible for their only law book and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited. . . . What a Eutopia – what a Paradise would this region be!”

— John Adams, Second President of the United States; Signer of the Declaration of Independence; Judge; Diplomat; One of two signers of the Bill of Rights.

John Adams, *Works*, Vol. II, pp. 6-7, diary entry for February 22, 1756.



VI. APPLICATION

What insight does this account provide for us when we are faced the struggle to forgive someone? Reference Hebrews 13:5b & 6 in your answer.

... being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"

Taking into account these scriptural passages on forgiveness, whom might the Holy Spirit be impressing upon you to forgive completely? What do you plan to do about it? Write out your plan of action.

Blank lines for writing a plan of action.

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Alexander Hamilton

Following his duel with Aaron Burr, in those final twenty four hours while life still remained in him, Alexander Hamilton called for two ministers, the Rev. J. M. Mason and the Rev. Benjamin Moore, to pray with him and administer Communion to him. Each of those two ministers reported what transpired. The Rev. Benjamin Moore reported: [I]mmediately after he was brought from [the field] . . . a message was sent informing me of the sad event, accompanied by a request from General Hamilton that I would come to him for the purpose of administering the Holy Communion. I went. . . I proceeded to converse with him on the subject of his receiving the Communion; and told him that with respect to the qualifications of those who wished to become partakers of that holy ordinance, my inquires could not be made in language more expressive than that which was used by our [own] Church. - [I asked], "Do you sincerely repent of your sins past? Have you a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of the death of Christ? And are you disposed to live in love and charity with all men?" He lifted up his hands and said, "With the utmost sincerity of heart I can answer those questions in the affirmative - I have no ill will against Col. Burr. I met him with a fixed resolution to do him no harm - I forgive all that happened." . . . The Communion was then administered, which he received with great devotion, and his heart afterwards appeared to be perfectly at rest. I saw him again this morning, when, with his last faltering words, he expressed a strong confidence in the mercy of God through the intercession of the Redeemer. I remained with him until 2 o'clock this afternoon, when death closed the awful scene - he expired without a struggle, and almost without a groan. By reflecting on this melancholy event, let the humble believer be encouraged ever to hold fast that precious faith which is the only source of true consolation in the last extremity of nature. [And I]et the infidel be persuaded to abandon his opposition to that Gospel which the strong, inquisitive, and comprehensive mind of a Hamilton embraced.

- Alexander Hamilton, Revolutionary General; Signer of the Constitution; Author of the Federalist Papers; Secretary of the Treasury.

John M. Mason, A Collection of the Facts and Documents Relative to the Death of Major General Alexander Hamilton (New York: Hopkins and Seymour, 1804), pp. 48-50.