

## More on Forgiveness from Preceptaustin

[https://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians\\_312-25#f](https://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians_312-25#f)

**John Bunyan's Picture of Forgiveness in his allegory Pilgrim's Progress** - In the beautiful memorial window of the Abbey Church at Elstow, the visitor can see, in the mystic colors of ecclesiastical glass, Christian (a major character in Pilgrim's Progress) kneeling at the foot of the Cross, while his dark and heavy burden rolls from his shoulders. John Bunyan's immortal picture is as true and brief an answer as can be given to the question, "What is the result of forgiveness?" Christian said that he "saw it no more"—the burden was gone. This will always be true. It does not mean that the memory of transgression will pass, or that its shadow will never fall across our path; but that the sting and shame and pain which constitute its burden are gone.—C. E. McCartney

Christ the Lord our debt has paid— All our sins on Him were laid;  
We like Him should try to live, Always ready to forgive!  
—Bosch

**C.S. Lewis (1898-1963)** sounded a cautionary note to the subject of forgiveness. "Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea," he said, "until they have some-thing to forgive."

**Spurgeon** exhorts us to **forgive** as we have been forgiven by God...  
Just as **readily**, just as **freely**, just as **heartily**, just as **completely**.

**Charizomai** and **aphiemi** (**aphesis**) are the two primary words used in the NT for **forgiveness**, referring either to vertical forgiveness (God and man) or horizontal forgiveness (man to man).

**Forgiveness in its essence is a decision made on the inside to refuse to live in the past.** It's a conscious choice to release others from their sins against you so that you can be set free. It doesn't deny the pain or change the past, but it does break the cycle of bitterness that binds you to the wounds of yesterday. Forgiveness allows you to let go and move on.

**A little humor** - The following was on the **Donelson View Baptist Church** sign...

**Forgive Your Enemies -  
It Messes with their Heads**

**British pastor and evangelist John Wesley** (1703-1791) was traveling with General James Oglethorpe, who was angry with one of his subordinates. The man came to the general and humbly asked for forgiveness, but he was gruffly told, "I never forgive!"

Wesley looked the general in the eye and said, "Then I hope, sir, that you never sin."

Would you want God to forgive you in the same way you forgive others? Think about it.  
—M. R. De Haan

## **Forgiveness includes these elements...**

1) We do not bring up to the person whom we have forgiven the thing we forgave. We are not to constantly harass them with reminders of the evil things they did. Some marriages stumble greatly at this point because the partners not only get hysterical, they also get historical! They go back over the past, ready to trot it out and rehash it. That shows that the past has never truly been forgiven. How terrible it would be if God forgave that way... if we constantly had to face reminders from Him of our evil deeds! Remember also that canceling the debt and "letting the offender off of your hook" (in your eyes) does not mean they are off of God's hook. Forgiveness involves transferring the prisoner over to the One who is able and responsible to mete out justice. It relieves us of the burden and responsibility to hold them in prison ourselves (a prison which really holds us!)

2) We do not tell others about the matter that is forgiven. We do not gossip about it to others. As discussed elsewhere on this page, it is not that we actually erase the hurt from memory but that we choose not to dwell on it. Empowered by the Spirit, we choose not to allow the painful thoughts to invade our mind and awaken feelings of resentment (cp "taking every thought captive" = 2Co 10:5-note). We need to continually remember how graciously God has set aside our own failures and how we did nothing to deserve God's forgiveness, so that we won't find ourselves saying things like "They don't deserve to be forgiven."

3) We do not remind ourselves of what has been forgiven! Even in our private thoughts we should not allow the offense to come up and color our attitude toward the one we have forgiven. If it does come up, we must choose (Spirit enabled, freely by grace) to put it away again (even seven times seventy if necessary).

## Have You Truly Forgiven?

Here are some questions to allow you to do a "self-assessment" of your heart (remembering that sin is deceitful and you may not even be aware of the "seeds" of unforgiveness that lay latent in your heart). Think about those instances where you have been injured by the words or deeds of another and as you do, assess your heart with the following queries...

- (1) When you think of that person are you still angry, bitter or resentful?
- (2) Do you have a subtle desire to see that person "pay" for what they did to you?
- (3) Do you have a secret desire for revenge, which says something like "I wouldn't mind if some "hurt" happened to the person who hurt me"?
- (4) Do you find myself telling others how the other person hurt you?

Perhaps you find none of those questions relate. Then consider applying God's searchlight to your heart by praying Ps 139:23, 24.

Forgiving does not mean whitewashing the past, but it does mean refusing to live there. Forgiveness breaks the awful chain of bitterness and the insidious desire for revenge. As costly as it is to forgive, there is only one consolation—unforgiveness costs far more. Forgiveness means that we have cancelled the debt and released the offender from their debt. It means we have "wiped the slate" clean and show this to be the case by not repeatedly bringing up the offense. Or if we think that we can never forgive a particular deep hurt ("You don't understand what they did to me!" True, we don't, but God does!) then we need to take some time to meditate on the truth of the depth of God's forgiveness in our life as believers (See above. Ponder especially Jesus' first and last words on the Cross. First = Luke 23:34. Last = Jn 19:30 where Jesus declared our otherwise unpayable sin debt was "Paid in Full" as He fully canceled out our "Certificate of Debt".) Let Calvary's love motivate you to choose the supernatural, grace strewn path of forgiveness (cp Lk 7:41, 42, 43). Remember that the main component of the word "forgive" is the verb "give"! A gift is not something the offending party earns or deserves. Freely we have been given, and freely we should give. We owed God a debt we could never pay. God paid a debt He did not owe. May we choose to let others see His forgiveness to us, through us.

## **WHEN FORGIVENESS SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE**

Corrie ten Boom, author of *The Hiding Place*, was taken captive and spent time in Nazi concentration camps during World War II. While in prison, Corrie saw incredible abuse, so inhumane that it drove the prisoners to incredible depths, including intentionally allowing lice to breed on their bodies because the more lice they had, the less likely it would be that the guards would molest them! And Corrie even witnessed the death of her own dear sister.

After the war, God sent Corrie ten Boom on a mission of mercy through the war-torn cities to encourage residents to choose forgiveness over bitterness. She would motivate her audiences by sharing some of the atrocities she had experienced, implying that if she could forgive such horrors, so could her listeners. One night speaking, she immediately recognized the man who came walking down the aisle as a particularly cruel guard in one of the concentration camps. The man did not recognize her however. As he approached Corrie he said...

Fraulein, you don't know me, but I was a guard in one of those camps. After the war, God saved me. I wish I could go back and undo those years. I can't, but I've just been prompted by God to come tonight and ask you, would you please forgive me?

Then he extended his hand to her. Can you imagine the horrible thoughts and memories that raced through Corrie's mind as she recognized his face and then even worse, heard his incredible plea for forgiveness? How could she? Corrie said her arms froze at her side and she was literally unable to move. The flashbacks in her mind replaying the atrocities, the death of her sister, the abuse. And then God's Spirit said to her,

Corrie, what have you been telling everyone else to do? As an act of your will, will you choose to forgive?

Corrie went on to explain what happened next...

I reached out my hand, and I put it in his, and I said, 'You're forgiven.'

She later reported that at that moment...

It was like a dam broke loose—all the bitterness and resentment—and God set me free.

## **The Cycle of Forgiveness**

Perhaps you've seen the Vietnam War picture of Kim Phuc, a 9-year-old girl running naked in terror from her village, hoping to escape the horror of napalm that was burning her skin. The day was June 8, 1972. The pilot of the South Vietnamese plane was carrying out orders to bomb enemy troop positions in the village of Trang Bang.

Twenty-four years later, Kim Phuc was invited to Washington in 1996 to speak at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and to place a wreath of flowers to honor the US troops who had given their lives during the war. Kim had said previously that if she could talk to the pilot who dropped the napalm on her, she would forgive him. The person who introduced Kim stated, "An innocent victim of war, she holds no anger at the United States. She feels no anger at the government of Vietnam. She feels no anger at the man who dropped the napalm on her."

How could she forgive those who were responsible for causing her so much pain, for scarring her for life? Kim had become a Christian. She understood forgiveness--how to give it and how to receive it (Col. 3:13). She had been forgiven by Jesus for her own sin, and she was allowing the cycle of forgiveness to continue. How about us? — Dave Branon

Jesus came our debt to pay,  
Saved our soul in grace one day;  
So in love we all should live,  
Ready always to forgive. --Bosch

***When it seems you can't forgive, remember how much you've been forgiven.***