

























## I AM FORGIVEN

Then again, at *Calvary they crucified Jesus who said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."* (Luke 23:34)

In Jesus there was no resentment, no anger, no desire for punishment upon the ones who were maltreating Him.

You see, most of us who sin against others do so blindly. The last time you sinned against someone did you grasp the import of the sin, the possible harm it was doing to the person? This suggests you may not believe you've sinned.

*"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves... If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse us from all wrongdoing."* (1John 1:8-9)

I suspect people say they haven't sinned because they may believe their sins are unforgivable. Or at times we take part in the sin and don't like to admit it. For example, if a person sins against me by what they said or did, but before maybe I said or did something. I incited them to speak or act as they did. Did we not both sin?

Thus, to know the word of God is a blessing for it helps us to understand how much Adonai wants to forgive our sins. But that requires faith, much like electricity, which most of us have faith in when we flick the wall switch.

It would it be great if we walked by faith daily and never doubted but that is not reality. So how do we forgive?

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## How Do We Forgive?

Regardless of the offense, it's a simple matter of first, we humble ourselves and forget about holding a "grudge" forever. Instead we "choose to hardly notice" when someone does us wrong. And rather than be "harsh and unforgiving" we choose to take a really deep breath, relax, and be "patient and kind," enduring through the trial.

This is Adonai's love. To look at the agony of the cross and the suffering Jesus endured, yet He felt compassion for those who put him there. Go back a few centuries while we're at it. Consider the Old Testament and how long Adonai put up with the people and their faithlessness. While a few good guys got it right a lot of rulers did no such thing and offended Adonai.

The Old Testament dealt harshly with offenses. In an article on the death penalty, the Old Testament lists thirty-six offenses leading to death and they include: idolatry, magic, blasphemy, and murder. Today murder is the only capital offense. So, why keep murder as deserving death? Perhaps to satisfy those who choose not to forgive in their desire for vengeance.

What does this have to do with forgiveness? Well, it brings to light the need to forgive no matter the offense, including murderers who get either the death penalty or a life sentence in prison. Does this negate the need to forgive? No.

While the nature of the entire New Testament is one of forgiveness, at the same time, it seems to take for granted the states right to execute offenders.

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In Matthew 7:2 it says, "Whatever measure you deal to others will be dealt to you," which doesn't say whether it is God who's doing the dealing, or the state.

Matthew 15:4 Jesus says "He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him surely die". I know a number of people who'd be on death row if this held true. Nonetheless, it simply shows the seriousness of speaking evil of parents, and being patient and kind instead in forgiveness.

Jesus refrains from violence, yet he does not deny the state's authority to exact punishment for capital offenses. Jesus' own death was attributed to such an offense.

When Pilate decided whether or not to crucify Christ, Jesus tells him the power to make this decision has been given to him by Adonai. (John 19:11).

Paul refers to the death penalty when he wrote of the magistrate. "If you do wrong, you have reason to be afraid. They have the power to punish, and they will use it. They are God's servants to punish those who do wrong (Romans 13:4).

So, where do we stand on forgiveness? If we uphold the law then we execute the perpetrator of the capital offense, while offering forgiveness for the sin, even murder. By the way, I'm not advocating for the death penalty, only forgiveness.

*Numb, the agony lessens, he no longer feels the pain or the pull of the nails holding him to the rough wooden cross. Blood trickles down, a slight annoying irritant upon his cold sensitive skin. Yet, Yeshua focuses beyond pain and the bother of such a petty thing, and has empathy for the people.*

*Seeing those who stare at Him, or play dice, he feels a rush of compassion, then realizes, 'they do not know nor understand what they do.' "Father," He cries. "Forgive these poor wretches, for they just don't understand." (Luke 23:34).*

Flogged, a crown of thorns woven and thrust upon his brow, crucified naked upon a cross, yet Yeshua forgave the ones who are torturing and soon to murder him. He knew the ones who stood by, gaping at his suffering, they neither understood the immediate nor eternal consequences of their actions; it was not within their grasp as mere humans.

Intent upon our pain and revenge, when we've been hurt often our heart turns to stone or we rage and justify our anger. Perhaps unfeeling, we to return to our iPad game or television or another device. Yet, if someone were to accuse us of such a heartless attitude, would we deny? In a way we do by excusing our attitude, justifying our actions.

Though we confess, are forgiven, and cleansed from our wrongdoing, we are not relieved of the penalty of our sin. It is not a matter of our being saved; that is a done deal. *We all will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what she has done, good or bad. (2 Cor. 5:10)*

Before you speak a harsh word or criticize, remember, to pluck the log from your own eye before you do so to another.

On the next page are questions. There's no right or wrong. It's simply a means for you to check yourself and decide on changes you may want to make in your own life.

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## WHAT DO I NEED?

Take a moment to consider: *Do you need forgiveness?*

*I've left space if you'd care to make a note to yourself.*

1. Always 2. Often 3. At times 4. Rarely 5. Never

\_\_\_ Are you without sin? *Ha. Don't I wish.*

\_\_\_ Are you able to rebuke a sinner?

\_\_\_ After rebuking, do you forgive the person?

\_\_\_ Do you forgive others *seventy times seven*?

\_\_\_ Do you know what you're doing when you sin?

\_\_\_ Do others know what they do when they sin?

\_\_\_ Do you confess your sins on a regular basis? (to Adonai or another: daily, weekly, or another)

\_\_\_ Do you accept forgiveness, Adonai, or another's

\_\_\_ Should we be cast from the church for immorality?

\_\_\_ Are the Christians you associate with living in sin such as: addiction, adultery, homosexuality, or living with another person outside of marriage or ...?



## SOLUTION

Forgiveness is an absolute when a sinner repents and when they do not. Recall, on the cross Jesus asked God to forgive those who crucified him *yet they were unrepentant*.

Take a look at His steps on forgiveness: <sup>1</sup>"When a person is angry with you, <sup>2</sup>leave where you are (leave the bitterness and resentment, or ruminating on the offense); and <sup>3</sup>forgive them and so, <sup>4</sup>release your anger."

Paul instructed the church to cast out a sinner living in sexual sin, yet to forgive once he repented.

Thus, we are set free from the bondage of our bitterness and resentment, which frees us to love the other and others without painful constraints.

Are you willing to forgive and accept forgiveness? If you are, the next step is to forgive those who have wronged you. And why do you need to forgive yourself? I say accept Adonai's forgiveness and Yeshua's sacrifice.

My auto-thought when I have trouble with forgiveness is to say: "Thank you, for suffering for my sins, going to the cross, and dying for my wrongdoings, my sins, Lord."

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BRANDY MARKS

## FORGIVEN BUT NOT FORGIVING

The kingdom of Heaven is like a king ... one man owed ten thousand talents but he had nothing to pay, and was going to be sold along with all he possessed so payment was made. He asked the king for patience and promised to pay him. The king, moved with compassion, forgave the debt.

Then this man did the opposite with someone who owed him a small amount and he demanded payment.

His debtor begged him for patience. Rather than forgive as he was forgiven, he threw the man into prison.

When the king heard, he became angry and delivered the man up until he paid all that was due.

You may not want to forgive someone and want to see them punished. But forgiveness does not release the person from the consequences of their sin! The person must answer to Adonai for their sin, whereas by forgiving we are set free from the guilt and any emotional bondage.

At times, triggers can activate anger. When this happens, you simply remind yourself you forgave the debt, *if you did*, and you don't have to be angry anymore.

One day, I was driving and at an intersection I went to make a left turn. A memory suddenly flashed through my mind about an ex-boyfriend. My rage flared and it took a minute to realize what was happening. Instead of raging and ruminating, I had to remind myself, "I forgave him. Anger is a waste of energy."

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To this day I don't know what triggers those events, but they surface in the blink of an eye. Sometimes situations create a 'flashback' and emotions surge (PTSD).

We may not understand the cause. In these instances, the same solution applies; if you forgave, remind yourself, and let the anger go; it's an inappropriate response.

Personally, I'm on the side of forgiving and forgetting and I've had some horrendous things happen to me from people who said 'I love you.' Several years after a difficult relationship ended, I had forgiven the sins against me and now remind myself when anger surges, "It's forgiven."

Even so, triggers bring forgotten memories usually when I'm talking about my poor relationships and suddenly, I'm angry. My words and anger remind me I've not forgiven the incident. I pray, "Lord, I forgive the person, help me forget." Generally, that is the last time that incident comes to mind with so much emotion attached. And if it does, it's easier to put aside.

## Make Them Pay

Sometimes, we refuse to forgive, we like to "hold it over" the person, make them pay with our silent outraged anger, yet this often effects all our other relationships negatively.

If someone hurt us and we don't forgive, and persist in the anger, our lives are wasted as we try to make them pay for the wrongs they did. Or we make someone else pay for their sin, a proxy upon whom we project our anger, an innocent person such as a spouse, or a friend, or coworker.

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Forgiving family is extremely important. My mind recalls for example, how my father handled success: laughter and a drink. Failure with tears of despair and a bottle of gin. My mom dealt with everything in a rage.

I've never been much of a drinker so I took after my mother and when family members would get drunk I used to get angry and rage. Now I mostly ignore it. It's their liver and their life as long as they don't use my money I don't have to give them.

How we are in a committed relationship, both marriage and close friends, tells how we experienced relationships in our families-of-origin, generally. We talk, walk, eat, think, and even drink like a parent and don't even realize the influence they had over us. If we forgive, there's a chance they'll choose to change and then do something different, something better.

Perhaps, we become more aware when dealing with our own children. I see myself and recognize the similarities in my sons all the time, or in the counseling office, or at work with certain authority figures.

In a relationship, we carry our family from childhood within, a culture made up of expectations about the world, people, and how we should behave in it and with them. Our past impacts our present life, like it or not.

Yet we do not have to let the past prevent us from doing what needs to be done to have peace in the here and now! Jesus said, heaven is within our grasp. Thus, we must reach out and grab hold of it. We often choose future mates and friends who resemble our parents in certain ways.

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To this day, I see no resemblance between my parents and one long-term relationship. Although, he sure looked a lot like my grandfather. That's a thought to ponder or not. My guy was weak like my father who drank and resented my mother's anger toward his drinking. My guy didn't drink. He did drugs and died in doing. I raged and did everything to make him quit. He did not. Had I loved him as he was, would it have made a difference? Possibly but I'll never know.

My father was murdered by a drunk. Two brothers killed themselves with alcohol related diseases. Another brother, finally entered recovery about the age of 75. My oldest son and his wife, both quit drinking rather than destroy their marriage. Another is on his way to dying from alcoholism. There's always hope. Nevertheless, I can't change what happened and I can't change anyone. It's all about acceptance and forgiveness.

Conflicts develop when we fail not to accept a person after a time simply because they remind us a parent, though we may not recognize it. Or we simply disagree with their behavior and want them to change and they refuse to do so.

In the office, often, I hear patients say, "Stop lecturing. You sound just like dad!" or "You're a control freak, like mom." Yet when you first met the person, he or she was fine by you. So, what's changed? Often, nothing. The glamour has disappeared and you're seeing what you could have but didn't see then. Adonai allow this romantic blindness! What was He thinking? Stretching us to grow, maybe?

Return to step one and love them with blinders on and step two is forgive. Or you could turn it around. Forgive first.

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The main thing is to *give up the need of trying to have your mate or friend understand, or you changing them.* Accept them are they are and they might change on their own.

You married him or her for who he or she was then and still are now, so what's not to love? I know a lot of people who hate hearing me say that, but those who listened have a better marriage now. Certainly, greater peace of mind.

Allow the person to be. Accept "what was and still is" and allow yourself to forgive the person (or your parents) because in reality no one does anything to us. I certainly didn't know the harm I was doing to my sons. I didn't do anything to them on purpose. Jesus said, *they do not understand what they do.* Each of us does the best we can with any given situation or person in our lives based on our life experiences and what we know at the time. As we mature, hopefully that changes.

Forgiveness: give up your right to feel resentment, negative judgment, or behaving indifferent toward the person. Instead, choose empathy, feel a sense of compassion, be generous, and do your best love for the individual (be patient and kind).

Forgiveness is not a grim obligation but we instead replace resentment with compassion, condemnation with a generous spirit or respect, and indifference and a desire for revenge with a sense of goodwill. It is a choice even if it doesn't feel like it right now! You have a starting place to forgive.

While forgiveness, at first, may require an act of will where you imagine yourself forgiving the offender even when you do not 'feel' like it. As you realize the freedom you gain then the act itself becomes more heartfelt.

While Jesus offered a forgiveness process, many people, including myself, do not find it easy. There was one Scripture in particular I found helpful, Psalm 139:23-24.

*Search me, Lord, and know my heart. Try me, and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked [unforgiving] way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way [to forgiveness].*

## The Key to FORGIVENESS

When I left jail in 1989, I never wanted to go back. Yet, to have a godly life, I needed to be healed and restored, which meant I had to forgive my offenders, the ones I rebelled against and felt hurt by and was wounded by.

As a child, I idealized my father and blamed my mother for everything. When it came to forgiving, I became honest about my past, and my father and mother. I quit blaming them for my misery and quit excusing my not forgiving; it solves nothing, but forgiveness does and I found it relieves a world of hurts.

Read the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) and discuss it as you consider this process. Here's a summary:

In the story, a father has two sons. The younger son asks for his inheritance from his father, who grants his request. Yet, this son is wasteful and extravagant and a partier who squanders his fortune and eventually becomes destitute.

As consequence, he returns home empty-handed intending to beg his father to accept him as a servant.

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Much to the son's surprise, his father does not scorn him rather he welcomes him home instead with a robe and ring and a celebration and party.

Envious, the older son bitter and resentful refuses to attend the party and complains. The father tells the peevish older son: "you are always with me. All I have is yours, but your younger brother was lost and now he is found."

What's not to celebrate, right?

What comes to mind as you read this story and how does it relate to any unforgiveness you may harbor?

I see my sons because I know how they feel about each other, but I also see myself and my sister once upon a time. I know all things work together for good with Adonai in charge.

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## PROCESS OF FORGIVENESS

### 1. Admit you're a Sinner

We humbly admit we are sinners and no different than our offender. After all, Adonai sees all sin the same. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8) We lie to ourselves.

### 2. Believe in forgiveness

We believe forgiveness is possible for both persons and behave as such, by forgiving them and accepting Adonai's forgiveness for our part. Explore your "part in the offense.

### 3. Confess to possess

We confess our willingness to forgive, as well as our lack of understanding, careless words, or whatever we may have done which added to the offense.

### 4. Discipline for both

We discipline ourselves to do the right thing. Confess doubts about the offender's sincerity, even when he or she professes sincerity; without honesty, distrust will continue. After many offenses it may be hard to trust the offender.

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4b. We set guidelines to ensure repentance: restitution, and accountability. Discipline is vital, in any area of life, so how well do you discipline yourself?

If in recover, they get a regular job, stop substance abuse, and we discipline ourselves not to go soft on them too soon.

### 5. Express yourself in love

We express our willingness to love unconditionally but also our suffering not to manipulate and punish the person but rather, our hope is she or he becomes aware of the pain caused and honestly repents and is restored to Adonai.

Write a scenario about how you feel whenever you consider actually forgiving the other person.

## 6. Forgive your offender

We go to or write to offer our offender forgiveness, though we may not restore the relationship. This depends on their level of repentance. Change requires time. Failure does not indicate an unrepentant heart, necessarily.

Confront sin, if confessed, forgive. Don't give up too easily. Write it out first, the words you would speak.

When I wrote my fantasy novel about Lucifer Unbound and imagined the words I would speak in asking for repentance. It was a thrill to imagine Lucifer repenting before Adonai and being released from hell. Very powerful but to do so, one must believe in forgiveness and follow through, taking joy in the moment as the angels in heaven rejoice.

## 7. Grace goes with you

We give Adonai's grace for "The trials you've had to bear are natural to all people. You can trust the Lord will not let you be tried beyond what you can bear..." (1Corinthians 10:13).

So, if you think, "I can't do it," trust in the Lord with all your heart and not your understanding but in all your ways submit to Him [and forgive] and he'll give your heart's desire.

*"We know Adonai works all things together for good for those who love him and are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).*

'Do not give the devil a base of operations" (Eph. 4:27) from which to criticize and ruin your forgiveness

Never carry a grudge, lose your temper, raise your voice in anger, call a person a foul name, or be spiteful.

Be friends with one another and kind, forgive as quickly as Lord Adonai forgave you in Christ. (Ephesians 4:31-32)

You might want to practice on a daily basis for a time, until you get the hang of it. Practice make us better if not perfect.

## 7. Grace goes with you

We give Adonai's grace for "The trials you've had to bear are natural to all people. You can trust the Lord will not let you be tried beyond what you can bear, and with a trial he will provide a way to escape and the strength to bear it." (1Cor. 10:13).

So, if you think, "I can't do it," trust in the Lord not yourself and in all your ways submit to Him [and forgive].

*"We know Adonai works all things together for good for those who love him and are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).*

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## Weekly Verses

Here's a few for your weekly reference:

1. "Lord, when someone won't stop doing wrong to me, how many times must I forgive them, seven times?"

Jesus answered, "I tell you, you must forgive them more and continue to forgive them even if they wrong you daily seventy-seven times a day."—Matthew 18:21-22

2. To forgive another's trespasses your Father in heaven, will forgive you, but if you do not forgive others, your Father won't forgive you. —Matthew 6:14-15

3. Whenever you stand [sit,] praying whatever you have against another, forgive so your Father who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." —Mark 11:25

4. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us of all our wrongdoing —1 John 1:9

5. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgive one another, as God in Christ forgave you. —Ephesians 4:32

6. Endure with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. —Colossians 3:13

7. Confess your faults to one another and pray for each other so you may be healed. The heartfelt prayer of a decent person is extremely effective. —James 5:16