



GOOD NEWS

for the unsaved WORLD!

(#150)
More forgiveness issues

1

It is important to understand the nature of forgiveness.

The RESULTS of forgiveness are WONDERFUL!

BUT ONLY IF YOU HAVE THE BIBLE'S TYPE OF FORGIVENESS. →

YOU CAN'T EXPERIENCE THESE BLESSINGS UNTIL YOU REPENT

Love
Blessing
Knowledge of salvation
Receiving the Holy Spirit
An inheritance with those who are sanctified (i.e., you become part of the "sanctified" group)
No further sacrifices are needed for your sins

(MORE ABOUT THESE AT ANOTHER TIME.)

– no matter how much *others* may want you to experience them.

2

(WE'VE ALREADY LOOKED AT THESE TWO ISSUES IN GREATER DETAIL.)

THE WORLD *has distorted forgiveness*, twisting and perverting it into the opposite of justice.

THE BIBLE teaches us the true nature of forgiveness, justice and mercy, as well as the consequences of sin against God (= mandatory death).

↳ A person cannot understand

- ✓ the nature of forgiveness, or
- ✓ the seriousness of sin against God,

without submitting to the teachings of Scripture.

★ **TO OBTAIN FORGIVENESS OF SINS AGAINST GOD, DEATH IS NECESSARY.**

It requires the death of someone who hasn't sinned.
Jesus fulfilled this requirement.

For without **the shedding of blood**, there is no forgiveness.
... Jesus suffered and died ... **to make his people holy by means of his own blood.**
Hebrews 9:22b; 13:12 (NLT)

3

JESUS PAID FOR OUR SINS, TO MAKE FORGIVENESS POSSIBLE.

Our forgiveness required:

THE GREAT EXCHANGE

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)



But this resulted in more than just forgiveness.

★ This exchange brought about our JUSTIFICATION. ★

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This is where the "Great Exchange" took place:

He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our **justification**.*
Romans 4:25 (NIV)

FORGIVENESS IS A PART OF JUSTIFICATION. IT DOES NOT COME BY ITSELF.

It comes with the other elements of justification. **THIS INCLUDES:**

- A changed heart and mind (the result of repentance).
- God's laws embedded in our heart/mind.
- A willingness to follow Jesus (not just doing religious activities).
- A hatred for sin.

* "Justification" means "declared righteous."
Anyone who doesn't want the "righteousness" part of justification cannot get the "forgiveness" part.

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FORGIVENESS ISSUES we have already looked at:

1. **Forgiveness does NOT cancel justice.** (The opposite of "justice" is "injustice," not "forgiveness.")
2. **SOMEONE has to pay AND justice needs maintained.** (For our sin against God, Jesus accomplished this.)
3. **There is an obligation connected to forgiveness.** It's not a "free ticket" for ongoing sin/offense/debt. (Repentance is a prerequisite for forgiveness.)
4. **FORGIVENESS does not erase all the consequences of sin.** (There may be long-term damage; there may also be consequences for the one who was forgiven, and for others.)

After all these years, I finally repented and was forgiven.

But my children followed my sinful example... and they don't want to repent.

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Another FORGIVENESS ISSUE we have already looked at:

5. God's FORGIVENESS of us is to *influence our actions* toward other people – including the way we *forgive* them.

IN THE LAST 2 WEEKS, WE'VE SEEN MANY COMMANDS AND EXAMPLES RELATED TO OUR FORGIVENESS OF OTHERS.

- ✓ **New Testament** instructions and examples.
- ✓ **Old Testament** examples. (This is the Bible the early church used for learning about forgiveness, since God hadn't yet given them the New Testament.)

Now for some ADDITIONAL FORGIVENESS ISSUES:

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Issue #6:

6. Forgiveness has to do with actual sin that causes a barrier or breakdown of fellowship. It's not mere differences of opinion in non-moral issues. **EXAMPLES:**

THESE REQUIRE REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS.	THESE DO NOT REQUIRE REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS.*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Greed. ✓ Theft. ✓ Sexual sin of any kind. ✓ Backbiting, slandering, grumbling... ✓ Murder. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Eating meat (vs. vegetables only). ✓ Driving a car (vs. walking). ✓ Informal worship services (vs. formal). ✓ Brushing teeth weekly (vs. daily). ✓ Wearing clean clothes (vs. dirty).

* (These may be related to sins that need forgiven. EXAMPLE: If a person with one of these perspectives has an attitude of superiority over someone with the opposite perspective, that *attitude* is sin.)

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Issue #7:

7. Forgiveness is **NOT** avoidance of the issue, or merely being kind.

Forgiveness and reconciliation is impossible without repentance.

We may have a forgiving spirit, but *their sin needs dealt with*.

- Ignoring the issue does not cause it to go away, and *may even encourage the sin to continue*. CHOOSING TO LEAVE A PERSON TRAPPED IN SIN IS NOT LOVE!
- Kindness is supposed to be a characteristic of our lives regardless of the situation. It's one of the "fruit of the Spirit"! BUT IT'S NOT THE SAME AS FORGIVENESS!

Kindness *does* have a potential role in repentance and forgiveness, but it doesn't replace them.

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EXAMPLE: God is kind to those who need repentance and forgiveness.

[Don't you realize] that God's **kindness** is intended to lead you to repentance?
Romans 2:4b (NIV)

⇒ **God is willing to forgive. But...**

- A person has to repent, in order to experience that forgiveness.
- If they *don't* repent, God is still kind – though eventually, judgment must come.

For he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.
Matthew 5:45b (CSB)

- Following God's example, we can hope (pray) that, perhaps, our kindness will lead people to repentance.

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⇒ **Here is how we follow God's example (whether or not people repent).**

Bless those who persecute you. Bless them, and don't curse them. ... Don't pay people back with evil for the evil they do to you. ... As much as it is possible, live in peace with everyone. Don't take revenge, dear friends. ... Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil with good.
Romans 12:17a, 18-19a, 21 (GW)

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven. For he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.
Matthew 5:44-45 (CSB)

- This is kindness from the heart – empowered by the Spirit.
- This kindness may lead them to repentance., It will also minimize the negative effects of their sins on *us* – i.e., on our attitude, conduct, etc.

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Issue #8:

8. In the examples and instructions we've looked at, we can see that there are two parts to forgiveness:

- 1) **OUR willingness** to forgive, to not hold their sin against them.
- 2) **THEIR willingness** to repent, so that they can receive the forgiveness we offer (and its blessings).

We may *want* them to repent, so that they can experience the blessings of forgiveness. But regardless of their response – even if they refuse to repent – *our* obligation to have a forgiving spirit *remains the same*.

If we discover that we have sinned against someone else, we need to be willing to repent, whether or not the other person is willing to forgive us.

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PART 1: Regarding OUR willingness to FORGIVE:

Do we respond like a SAVED or UNSAVED person?

The SAVED response: It starts with God.

- God forgave us, therefore we forgive others – not to earn anything, but as a *response of love* for God and neighbor, and because *we want to be like Jesus*.
- When we find commands (in Scripture) about the need to forgive, we want to obey them. We want to forgive others, following the example of Jesus, who forgave us.
- This response is proof that we are forgiven.

SCRIPTURE INSTRUCTS US:
"Forgive as the Lord forgave you."
WE WANT TO OBEY GOD. AS WE DO, WE CAN PRAY:
"Forgive us as we forgive others."

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The UNSAVED response: It starts with self.

- They are unforgiving. They do not want to follow Jesus, so God doesn't forgive them.
- IF they learn about the Bible's commands to forgive others, they:
 - ✓ Ignore them.
 - ✓ Make excuses.
 - ✓ Just "never get around to it."
 - ✓ Say "I know I should, but..." or "someday I'll..."
 – *whatever the excuse may be, the obedience just doesn't happen.*

If they do have a form of "forgiveness," :

- ✓ It may be the distorted type the world offers.
- ✓ It may be done for the wrong reasons (motives).

- Their response is proof they have *not* been forgiven by God.

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"What if I DON'T want to forgive them?"

If you're NOT following Jesus,

- You're acting normal, since that's one of the typical responses of an unsaved person. *
- You are following the impulses of the flesh (sinful nature).
- If your conscience is still working, it may condemn you... but with practice, you can become very skilled in suppressing your conscience.

* Your other options, besides "not forgiving," are:

- ✓ Fake it.
- ✓ Distort it.
- ✓ Do it for the wrong reasons (i.e., motives that do *not* honor God).

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If you ARE a follower of Jesus,

- The Spirit who lives inside you does want to forgive them... and you do want to be controlled by the Spirit.
- It's just that, at this moment, your flesh is screaming out so loud that you aren't hearing the Spirit.
- If you are following Jesus, this can only be a temporary situation.
- Once you acknowledge this sin and repent, you can begin to follow the Spirit again... and can forgive them.
- The flesh may still scream out in protest; but you have the Spirit's power to overcome the flesh.

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PART 2: Regarding the person who NEEDS forgiven:

Yes, repentance is necessary – and we may have to confront them, in a way that honors God.

Every Scripture passage that focuses on this issue says that they need to *repent* – or an equivalent concept: confess, listen (pay attention) to the rebuke, etc.

This is true, whether the sin is against God or against other people.

"If your brother sins, rebuke him. If he **repents, forgive him.**"
Luke 17:3b (NET)

OUR willingness to forgive does not guarantee that THEY will be willing to repent.

We are to follow God's example of expressing kindness, regardless of how they respond.

(They don't cancel our obligation to love God and neighbor.)

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There may be some issues that complicate matters.

- ⇒ **What if they are just pretending to repent?** (This is hardly a real issue.) Unless they express approval of the sin and/or continue to do it, we do not have to try to guess. God knows if they have *secretly* continued in the sin, and he will deal with it in due time (and perhaps bring it out into the open). Scripture *does* warn us that "false believers" will exist. (Regardless, we are still to have a forgiving spirit.)
- ⇒ **Some situations may be quite complex.** We may have also sinned against *them* (and need to deal with it). We and they may have different views about what happened (whether right, wrong, or half-way in between). There may also be the issue of deliberate vs. accidental sin.
- ⇒ **Are some sins "unforgivable"?** The only situation mentioned in Scripture involved religious leaders who had become convinced that the *Holy* Spirit was actually an *evil* spirit. People with that view would never *want* to repent! (Mark 3:28-30)

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YOUR MISSION:

LIFE IS FULL OF SITUATIONS where we could be either:

1. The one who needs to *forgive* someone, or
2. The one who needs to *repent and be forgiven*.

(After all, none of us are sinless – though we who are following Jesus are in the *pursuit* of a sinless life.)

AS YOU GO THROUGH THE WEEK, consider what you need to do, if either of these forgiveness/repentance situations occur.

👉 Consider what the Bible says, and apply it to your situation!

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Credits

SCRIPTURE

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