



Forgiveness and Reconciliation

WCBS 2007
At Menucha

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Outline

- Class 1 – Basics on God's forgiveness
- Class 2 – Forgiveness at core of God's plan
- Class 3 – Forgiveness between people
- Class 4 – Forgiveness is unconditional
- Class 5 – Transformation through forgiveness

Why Does God Forgive?

- Sin (action) is separate from character
- Sin must be dealt with because it destroys
- God's justice demands forgiveness
- It's God's expression of mercy, an essential attribute
- To produce transformation of character

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Class 1 : Basics on God's Forgiveness?

Why Does God Forgive?

Why does God forgive? Why does he not just "wink at" (cf Acts 17:30-31) sins, like He did ignorance? After all, God knows our nature, He understands our weaknesses, etc. Why isn't it okay for God to say "it's ok, I know your weaknesses and accept you as you are"?

Because:

Sin (action) is separate from character – God may accept our character and weaknesses, but:

Sin must be dealt with, because it destroys: "the wages of sin is death" (and all of Romans 6). God could punish sin with death, however:

God's justice demands forgiveness – the provision of His Son demonstrates His righteousness- in other words, that He is just, or completely fair (Gen 18:25). Because He is just (or fair) in His treatment of mankind, He had to deal with sin- make it possible to abolish it. Then, by being fair (just), he could make us righteous (justify us) as far as He is concerned. This is whole point of Romans 3:23-25. (expound)

An essential part of God's character is that He is merciful (Ex 34:6-7) You cannot express or practice mercy without acknowledging, confronting and dealing with sin – through forgiveness. God needs (if it is possible for God to "need" anything) to practice forgiveness. It gives opportunity for the expression of His compassion, kindness and mercy.

The purpose of forgiveness is to ultimately bring about transformation of character. (1 Pet 2:21-24, 1 Jno 1:8-9, 1 Jno 3:1-3, 9)

Defining Forgiveness Versus Other Terms

"forgiveness" is not clearly defined as a concept/bible definition, in contrast to other doctrinal terms:

"Faith" – clearly defined in Heb 11:1 and "Abraham believed God (trusted that what God said was true) and it was counted to him as righteousness" - Romans 4:3

"Lovingkindness" – "chesed" – faithful love - Exodus 34:6

"The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" - ESV

"Love" - 1 Cor 13

"Redemption" – clearly defined: return something/someone to original owning family. See Leviticus 25.

Definition of Divine Forgiveness

- When I acknowledge my sin and repent, (1 Jno 1:9) God abandons His rightful anger towards me because of the offence committed (Romans 2:8), expresses kindness to me by restoring me to full fellowship with Him and expresses mercy in not carrying out the due sentence for that sin (Psalm 130:4), in effect pardoning me (Matt 26:28). God then blots out any memory He has of the sin (Ps 51:9, Jer 31:34, Heb 10:17). He cleanses me from unrighteousness (1 Jno 1:9), purifies my conscience, (Heb 9:14) and considers me justified (Romans 5:19).

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When God forgives, He chooses to shift both His attitude and proximity towards the sinner.

Figures of Speech for Forgiveness

- Blot out – Acts 3:19 , Ps 51:1, 9
- Cleanse – Psalm 51:2,7 1 John 1:7
- Purify (our conscience) - Heb 9:14
- Forgetting – Heb 10:17
- "To release" (Gk)- Luke 6:37
- "To send forth" (Gk) – Matt 6:12 cp Lev 26-22 (scapegoat)
- "Freedom, dismissal" (Gk) –trans. "remission"
 - Baptism – Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3, Acts 2:38
 - Breaking of bread – Matt 26:28

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Further explanations:

Terms such as 'blot out' – Acts 3:19 , Ps 51:1, 9

and 'cleanse' (Ps 51:2, PS 51:7 – often used of spiritual cleansing – cf Lev 14, and Prov 20:9, Mal 3:3 . David's use in Ps 51 is only use in Psalms.)

and: "1 Jn 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

"purify" our conscience – see Heb 9:14

These are figures of speech sometimes used to describe the literal act of forgiveness. Although figurative, they help us understand the literal significance of forgiveness.

God forgets – Heb 10:17 because of Christ, vs. a "not forgetting" (Heb 10:1-3) under the law.

One Greek word means "to release" - cf Luke 6:37 -

"Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven;"

Another word literally means "to send forth" - eg: Matt 6:12 - Lord's prayer - this is same idea as scapegoat in Leviticus 26:20-22- it was released and sent forth, bearing the sins of the people (note - this was a symbol - the goat is not held responsible for their sins, in the same way Jesus bore our sins - His death involved carrying the burden of the sins of mankind - God made him to be sin who knew no sin. 1 Peter 2:21-23.

Matt 18:27 uses both Greek words: "And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. ESV - "released" = sw as in Luke 6:37, and "forgave" = same word as in Matt 6:12. We will return to Matt 18 in a later class.

This shows both dimensions of forgiveness.

Another Greek word:

"apheesis" - trans. "remission". Similar word as "to send forth". This is the noun, while related word in Lord's prayer (Matt 6:12) is verb.

Strong's defines it as "freedom". Vine's has "a dismissal, release". Thayer's has 1. "release, as from bondage or imprisonment" and 2. "letting (sins) go, as if they had not been committed".

Used of:

Baptism – Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3, Acts 2:38

Breaking of bread – Matt 26:28

These ideas: sending forth, release, freedom – keep these in mind as we later consider personal forgiveness.

Blood of Christ – Symbolic of Forgiveness

Eternal life not possible without accepting benefits of Jesus' shed blood

John 6:53 'So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.'

We must have faith in his blood (not the blood itself, but what it symbolizes- forgiveness)

Rom 3:25 "whom God did set forth a mercy seat, through the faith in his blood, for the shewing forth of His righteousness" (Young's Literal Translation)

Justified (forgiven) by His blood

Rom 5:9 "Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God." ESV

Eph 1:7 "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" ESV

Jesus' death is part of original promises to Abraham

Matt 26:28 "blood of the covenant" (and Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20).

Heb 13:20 "Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant" ESV – and 1 Cor 15:17 – "And if Christ had not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins". ESV

Church collectively is made up of forgiven sinners!

Acts 20:28 "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood." ESV

Forgiveness produces peace with God and each other

Eph 2:13-16 "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility." ESV

Col 1:20 "...and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."

Jesus' shed blood accomplished something good, unlike wasted life of Abel

Heb 12:24 "...and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel." ESV (or – speaks more graciously)

We are redeemed or ransomed by His blood. Forgiveness – at baptism initially and especially) makes redemption possible

Col 1:13-14 "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." ESV

Heb 9:12 "he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption." ESV

1 Pet 1:19 "but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot." ESV

God's forgiveness because of Christ means we can have the most intimate fellowship with God, with no barriers such as a defiled conscience or impure hearts – forgiveness cleanses us of these.

Heb 10:19-22 "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." – ESV

We, through forgiveness and redemption, will live forever

Rev 5:9 "And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." AV

Class 2 – Forgiveness is at the core of God’s Plan
(Forgiveness is a gift and forgiveness is hard)

God’s forgiveness deals with the problem of sin. This seems obvious, but look at how God responds, for example, to Adam and Eve.

They sin, and the result is the shedding of blood, for the remission of sin- this is the Divine requirement. But, instead of focusing on the legal requirement, let’s focus on God’s gift. In one scenario He could have required Adam and Eve to kill the animals and to make their own coats. Instead, He says, in effect, “you sinned, you’ve messed things up, you are separated from Me by your actions. You need my love, acceptance and fellowship. I’ll give you a gift to make that possible! Keep this in mind as we’ll come back to this thought later on in the week.

Genesis 22

- What did Abraham think was going to happen? He must have known his God did not require human sacrifices - see Romans 4:20-21 which confirms Abraham's unswerving belief that God would provide a son who would fulfill the promise of Abraham being the father of many nations. Also - God would not kill Abraham's only son.

Abraham also clearly believed in the resurrection and the provision of a redeemer: "God will provide the lamb". Jesus confirms this in John 8:56 - "your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad."

The idea of resurrection is in Hebrews 11:17-19 - "He received Isaac back from the dead".

Genesis 22: Only Son

- Hebrews 11:17 – “His only begotten son”
 - Echo of Gen 22
- “Only (son)” = “Precious” or “darling” in Hebrew
- Used 12 x in OT
- Genesis 22:
 - v2 “Take now thy son, thy only”
 - v12 “thou hast not withheld thy son, thy only son”
 - V16 “by myself I have sworn... not withheld your son, your only son”

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"Only son" - Gen 22:2

-Cf Heb 11:17 - "His only begotten son" - God the Father and His Son- deliberate echo of Gen 22:2.

This is the real reason for the trial - God wanted to demonstrate to Abraham, father of the faithful, how painful the sacrifice would be that would usher in the forgiveness of sins. We see this lesson in the repeated use of "only son" in Gen 22. The Hebrew actually means "only one," or "precious, darling". It is used 12 times in the OT:

- Gen 22:2 - "Take now thy son, thy only"
- Gen 22:12 - "thou hast not withheld thy son, thy only son"
- Gen 22:16 "By myself I have sworn... not withheld your son, your only son".

By the end of the experience, Abraham and Isaac both have learned the lesson of how painful it is to willingly offer that which is most precious to you in order to achieve forgiveness.

Jehovah Jireh – God’s Gift

- v4 “Abraham lifted up his eyes and *saw*”
- v8 “God will *provide*”
- v13 “Abraham lifted up his eyes and *saw*”
- v14 “In the mount of the LORD it shall be *seen*”

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Forgiveness is a Gift

This makes him appreciate the gift of God all the more - as expressed in the phrase "Jehovah Jireh" - "Jireh comes from a root word used in v. 8 "Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." (ESV) and v.4 "Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw" - also v. 13 and then v.14

"In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen." - AV

Lesson: forgiveness is a gift.

A Vow - God contrasted with Jephthah

Compare "by myself I have sworn"- Gen 22:12. - is commented on in Hebrews 6:13-14. This was a true oath. Another place where 'thy only' or "precious" occurs is in Judges 11:34, the incident of Jephthah's daughter. Jephthah's vow was rash. It cost him his daughter's life, due to her honourable conduct, and although Jephthah achieved great military victories, he could not gain the victory of life over death. So, in Judges 12:7, it's recorded: "then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried". In contrast, God's promise and vow were certain and true, and the vow, fulfilled in the offering of God's only Son, brought true and lasting victory over death for all mankind.

The Risen Christ is God's Precious One

- Psalm 68:6
 - “God setteth the solitary in families”
 - “Setteth” = “to sit down” as to judge
 - “Solitary” = “precious” (only son)
 - “Families” = “house”
- “God sitteth down (as to judge) His precious one in His house (ecclesia)”
- Cf Heb 1:1-3, 3:6
- Messianic Psalm – verse 18 cited in Eph 4:7-10

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The Risen Christ is God's Precious One

In Psalm 68:6 we see another use of this word: "God setteth the solitary in families". "Families" is also often translated as "house" so we can read this verse as: "God setteth His only precious one in His house". In fact, the word "Setteth" has a primitive meaning of "sit down" - as to judge, etc: "God sitteth down (to judge) his precious one in His house" - cf Heb 1:1-3, 3:6. If there are any doubts that Psalm 68 is a Messianic psalm, see verse 18 - cited in Ephesians 4:7-10 - same context!

So the parallel between Abraham and Isaac, God and Christ is clear. Just as Isaac was Abraham's precious one, so Jesus Christ is God's precious one.

Further supported by 1 Peter 1:19 – “but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. “ ESV. Strong's has “beloved” as one meaning.

Righteousness = Being Forgiven

- Romans 4: 3 -5
- Abraham – counted as righteous
- David – same “blessing”
- Paul cites Psalm 32!

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Forgiveness at root of Genesis 22

To recap, we concluded that Abraham understood:

God's promise of a redeemer

· The resurrection

But, also central to the lesson he and Isaac learned was forgiveness. His faith was counted to him as righteousness. Romans 4 teaches us that righteousness = state of forgiveness.

Romans 4:3 - "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him as righteousness"

v. 5 - this phrase is repeated

v. 6 - Refers to David: He speaks of same "blessing" - because of principle of God's work of forgiveness in his life. Paul proves this by citing Psalm 32, which is David's expression of appreciation for the blessing of forgiveness.

In this passage, Paul's aim, like God teaching Abraham, is to show us how great the sacrifice of God and Christ was. Romans 5:6-8 confirms this. To take this one step further, we can understand how we can only be counted righteous because of God's grace towards us. The signal act of kindness by God that is an expression of that grace is the gift of his Son.

Personal Lesson

- Forgiveness is hard
- Forgiveness is a gift

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The Personal Lesson of Forgiveness

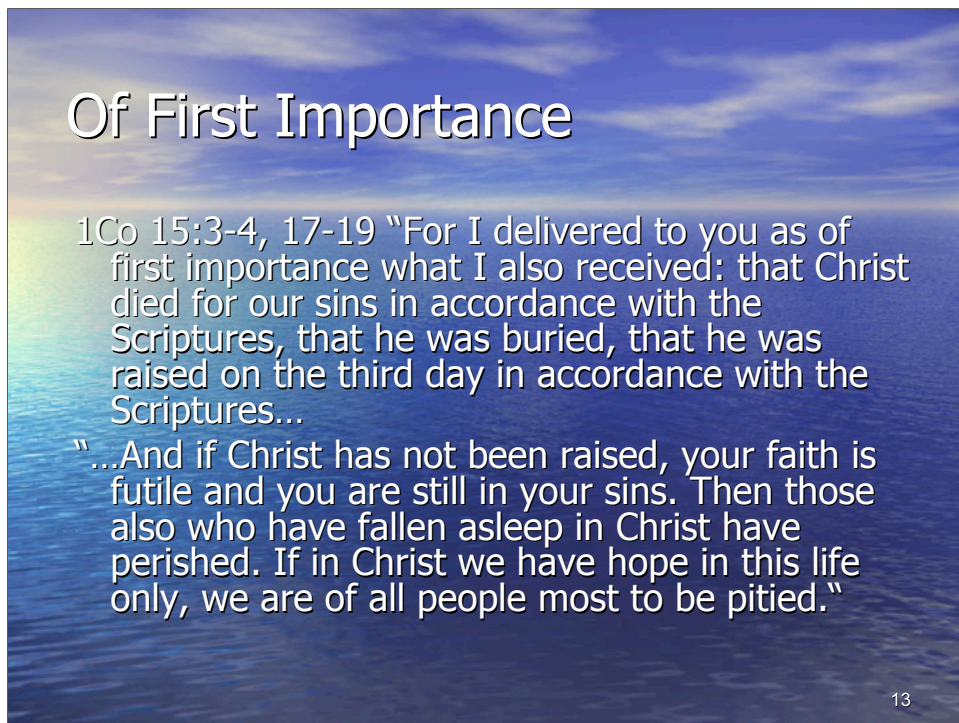
The clear lesson for us, in our lives, is to take the challenge of one of the core principles of our faith and put it into practice: "forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive others". We may often find practicing forgiveness towards others extremely difficult, especially if we have been the victim of a serious hurt or injustice. But we should not be surprised it is so - God taught Abraham and Isaac this lesson directly. Let us now learn it and live by it, as true sons and daughters of the father of the faithful

Class 3 – Forgiveness Between People

In this class we look at how forgiveness works between people, and do some difficult work examining objections to forgiving, etc.

Importance of Learning How To Forgive People

I believe that the death and resurrection of Christ and its relation to forgiveness is the most important fact of my understanding of God's plan. I suspect that's true for most of us. Certainly Paul taught this:



I have come to believe that practicing forgiving others is equally important and that developing this skill will make a significant positive contribution to the moral, spiritual and mental health of most of us. In other words, forgiving benefits the one who forgives – and generally, benefits them more than the one who is forgiven.

Review: Why God Forgives

- Sin (action) is separate from character
- Sin must be dealt with because it destroys
- God's justice demands forgiveness
- It's God's expression of mercy, an essential attribute
- To produce transformation of character

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Review of Why God Forgives

Because:

Sin (action) is separate from character – God accepts our character and weaknesses.

God cannot accept sin. It must be dealt with, because it destroys

God's justice demands forgiveness – the provision of His Son declares His just character

God practices mercy and shows kindness by confronting and dealing with sin through forgiveness.

The purpose of forgiveness is to transform of our characters.



**“To forgive is to set a prisoner free and
discover that the prisoner was you.”**

– Lewis B. Smedes

Review: Definition of Divine forgiveness

When I acknowledge my sin and repent, God abandons His rightful anger towards me because of the offence committed, expresses kindness to me by restoring me to full fellowship with Him and expresses mercy in not carrying out the due sentence for that sin, in effect pardoning me. God then blots out any memory He has of the sin. He cleanses me from unrighteousness, purifies my conscience and considers me justified.

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Definition of Human Forgiveness

"People, upon rationally determining that they have been unfairly treated, forgive when they willfully abandon resentment and related responses (to which they have a right), and endeavor to respond to the wrongdoer based on the moral principle of beneficence, which may include compassion, unconditional worth, generosity, and moral love (to which the wrongdoer, by nature of the hurtful act or acts, has no right). " - Helping Clients Forgive, Enright and Fitzgibbons, APA, March 2007, page 24.

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" - Helping Clients Forgive, Enright and Fitzgibbons, APA, March 2007, page 24.

Divine vs Human Forgiveness

God -> Human	Human -> Human
Sin committed	Genuine unfair act
Rightfully angry	Rightfully angry
Chooses to freely forgive (upon confession+repentance)	Chooses to forgive
Gives up right to be angry	Gives up right to be angry
Pardons the offender	
Expresses kindness and mercy	Expresses forgiveness through gifts – moral/tangible
Restores to full fellowship	Shows compassion and moral love
Forgiveness accomplished via perfect, one-time sacrifice of Christ	Forgiveness an ongoing process

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Notice similarities (and differences) to Divine forgiveness:

Differences

God requires our confession and repentance in order to forgive.

God pardons the offence/offender – commutes the due sentence of death.

Caveat to God requiring something from us

Even though it would appear God requires us to confess and repent, God really did not require anything of humanity in order for Him to accomplish His plan in providing a Savior. Think about it – did God say to Adam and Eve, after the fall: “From now on, be good, don’t make any mistakes, or I won’t send My beloved Son to die for the sins of the world.” No!

Romans 5:6-8 demonstrates God was willing to reconcile humanity to Himself regardless of our actions:

Rom 5:6-8 “For while we were still weak (literally: powerless – often trans ‘sick’), at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die-- but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Possibly Paul still had David in mind, left over from Romans 4, when he wrote these words. There is a strong echo of Psalm 32:3-5 here.

Other instances where confession/repentance not required:

Mark 2:1-12 – no confession there.

John 9- question of sin – Jesus teaches that the question of who sinned is not relevant to forgiveness.

How do we explain these discrepancies? We know for sure that the ideal is for us to confess and repent then ask for forgiveness for sins we know we have committed/ or for failing to do things we should have. However, we can also deduce that we should pray for those things we don’t even know we have done wrong.

The Gulf Between God and Man

Now we get to one of the most important points of understanding regarding forgiveness between ourselves.

Rom 3:9 -24 “What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: **"None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."**

"Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips."

"Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."

"Their feet are swift to shed blood;
in their paths are ruin and misery,
and the way of peace they have not known."

"There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, **so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.** For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**, and are justified by his grace as a gift. . .”

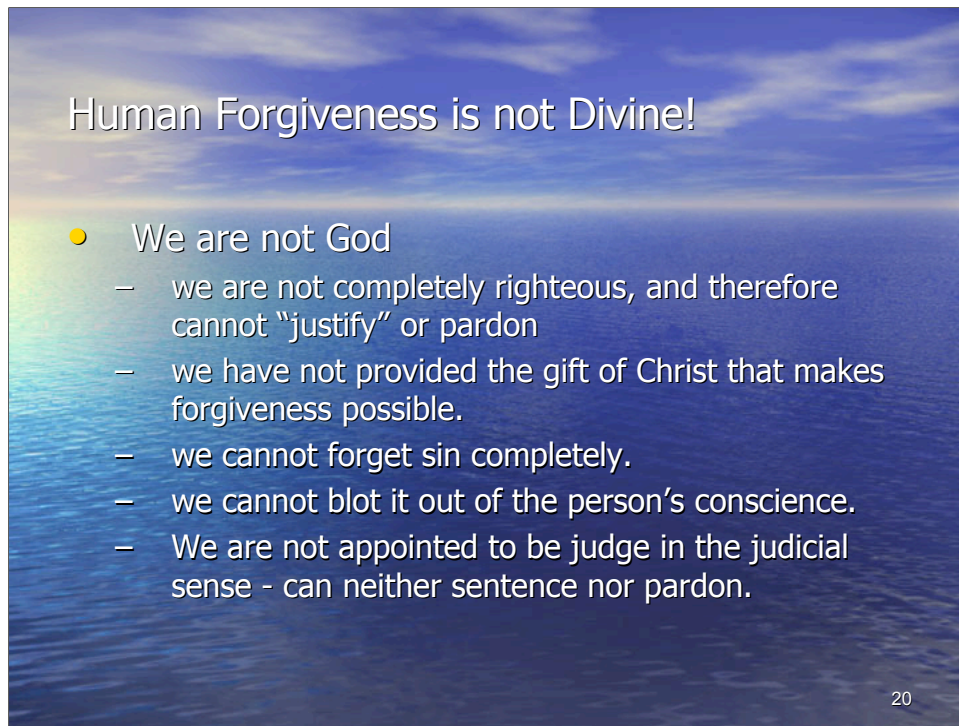
The language in this passage is repetitive and absolute in making the point that all human beings are at the same level with regards to God. All are in need of God's mercy. All fall short of his Glory. No one can defend themselves to God. We are all essentially worthless without His grace in our lives.

Paul makes this point so forcefully to draw the clear distinction between God's righteousness and our sinfulness. We need God's pardon – the eradication of sin from His mind and our consciences.

Between people, it's different.

People Can Forgive. They Cannot Pardon

Because God is righteous and has provided the perfect gift in the death of His Son, He can not only forgive but pardon our offences. This is one of the key reasons we must forgive, even if confession and repentance are not present:



Human Forgiveness is not Divine!

- We are not God
 - we are not completely righteous, and therefore cannot "justify" or pardon
 - we have not provided the gift of Christ that makes forgiveness possible.
 - we cannot forget sin completely.
 - we cannot blot it out of the person's conscience.
 - We are not appointed to be judge in the judicial sense - can neither sentence nor pardon.

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What we are doing when we forgive is very different from what God does. Our forgiveness does not have a judicial (or, if you prefer, legal) element. This eliminates at least one false objection to forgiving: "It's not my position to forgive- that's up to God to do."

- 2 Cor 2:5 -11 contradicts this assertion:

"Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure--not to put it too severely--to all of you. For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him.

For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs. "

In this case Paul teaches that he can both forgive on others' behalf and regard their forgiveness as if it had been his own.

Forgiveness is Not:

- A legal pardon
- Pseudo-forgiving
- Condescension
- Giving up right to legal justice
- Condoning or excusing
- Instantaneous
- Forgetting
- A weakness
- Justifying
- Calming Down

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What Forgiveness Is Not

A legal pardon – we can't say 'it's not my position to forgive' or 'it's up to God.'

Condescension – in other words, forgiving from an attitude of moral outrage or superiority, or with the sense that now you've put yourself in a position of power is completely antithetical to the spirit of forgiveness which involves kindness and mercy.

Condoning or Excusing

Forgetting – the saying “time heals all wounds” is not true – time simply dulls the senses, but if you are thrown in the same situation with someone who has hurt you in the past and you have not worked on forgiving them, you will probably experience the same hurt and anger with the same degree of intensity again. However, forgiving can help you “remember” your past experiences in a much healthier way – with less negative emotion.

Justifying (ie – coming to an understanding that an offence didn't really take place)

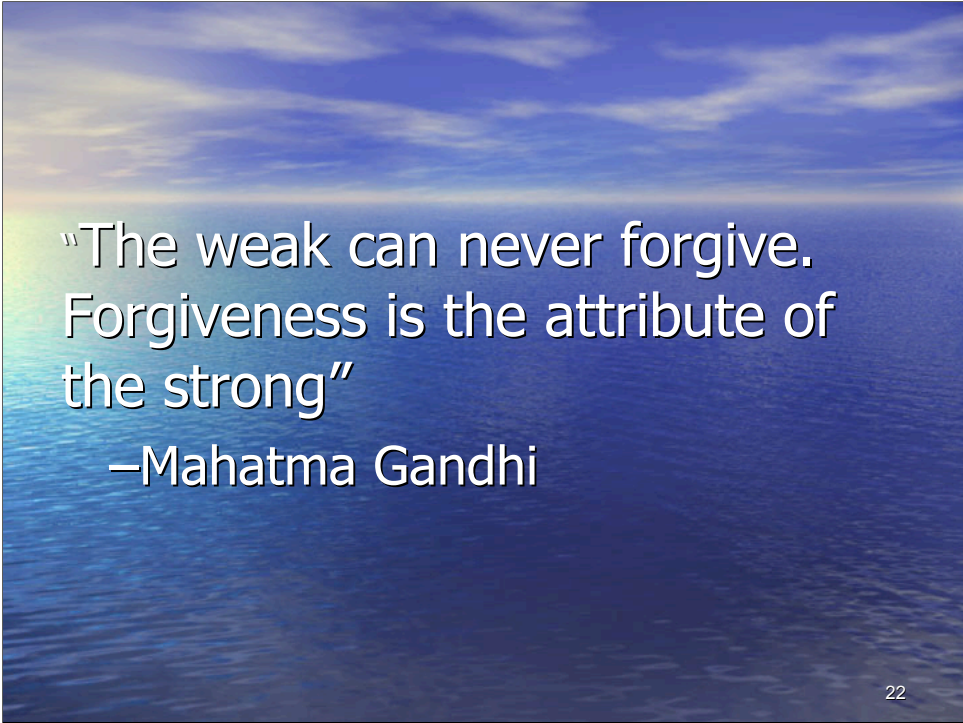
Calming down. “In some cases, outrage diminishes over time. That's not forgiving. Forgiveness does not lessen what happened; it alters how we view the person in spite of what he or she did.” - Forgiveness is a Choice, Robert Enright, p. 29

Pseudo-forgiving (saying “I forgive you” when no real hurt was caused – like after breaking a glass).

Giving up the right to justice – ie you can forgive a criminal, but that doesn't mean they shouldn't experience the legal and social consequences of their offence.

Instantaneous – forgiveness is a process, and often, especially with deep hurts, a long one.

A weakness – genuine forgiveness does not mean you have to consider yourself weak. It is not submission to evil, or condoning wrongdoing in any way. Even if others may see you this way, you will know otherwise.



“The weak can never forgive.
Forgiveness is the attribute of
the strong”

–Mahatma Gandhi

Sin = Debt

- Matt 6:12, 15 – “trespasses” = “debt”
- Romans 4:4 – only other use of “debt”
- Luke 11:4 – “indebted to us”
 - See Rom 13:8 “Owe no man any thing...”
- Many parables about debt and forgiveness
 - Eg: Matt 18:23-35
 - Luke 7:40-47

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Sin = Debt

In Matt 6:12, Jesus makes the term ‘debt’ synonymous with ‘trespasses’ or ‘offences’ (“sins” in Luke’s parallel account).

Romans 4:4 is the only other use of the word ‘debt’ :

- “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” (AV)

-clearly the word has to do with owing. So when we ‘trespass’ against God or others we are in a position of debt – we owe them.

In Luke 11:4, the parallel text to Matthew 6 reads:

“and forgive us our sins (“hamartia”), for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.”

“indebted to us” – see also Romans 13:8: “Owe (sw) no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. “

Word in Matthew 6 is from same root – both words come up in Matthew 18:23-35 – parable on forgiveness.

Many of Jesus’ parables along these lines have to do with debt.

Eg: Matt 18:23-35

Luke 7:40-47 – woman with alabaster of ointment.

What this teaches us is that we owe someone when we sin against them, or they owe us. The offender is put in a position of debt versus the one offended. This is why when we choose to forgive we are giving a gift. We have a right to be angry, and choose to forfeit that right.

Forgiveness Is A Gift

- Gift = Choice
- Gift = Free
- Gift – Removes the debt
- Ephesians 4:32
 - “forgiving” = “charizomai” (Gk)
 - To bestow a free gift, favor
 - Luke 7:21 “gave sight”
 - Luke 7:42-43 “forgave”
 - Romans 8:32 “freely give all things”

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Forgiveness is a Gift (involving choice)

Just as we saw in the case of Abraham that God's forgiveness is a gift to us, so it is when we give it to others.

Eph 4:32 – “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” ESV

Reminder that “forgiving” – Gr: charizomai – to bestow a free gift, favor unconditionally. Therefore we are to bestow forgiveness as a free, unconditional gift. cf Col 2:13 and Col 3:13 sw – in Col 2:13 it is God who has forgiven us. In Col 3:13 it's us doing the forgiving, in the same way Christ forgave us (interesting to note it is Christ who does the forgiving – by God's authority, just as He explained in the gospel accounts).

(other words for forgiveness not used here are “aphimai” and “kalupto”, meaning “to cover”.)

See also:

Luke 7:21 “gave (charizomai) sight”

Luke 7:42-43 – “forgave”.

Romans 8:32 – “freely give (charizomai) all things” – “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” ESV

Choice or Duty?

- Our whole life in Christ is response to a command – Acts 17:30
- We choose:
 - To be baptized
 - To obey God
 - To trust God
 - To practice our discipleship
 - To meet together to remember Christ's death
 - To love
 - To forgive
 - To practice kindness and mercy
- Like Jesus: -"Lo, I have come to do Thy will, O God". Heb 10:5-7

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You may argue that forgiveness is a duty – Matt 6:14-16, Mark 11:25. However, our whole walk in Christ is in a sense a duty, a response to a command – just as God commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). We choose to obey – we choose to trust, and therefore we choose to practice our discipleship, including choosing to be baptized, to meet together to remember Christ's death, to love, to forgive, to practice kindness and mercy. The manner in which we bring glory to God is by choosing to follow Him, as Jesus did (Heb 10:5-7 -"Lo, I have come to do Thy will, O God").

Parallels in Divine Forgiveness

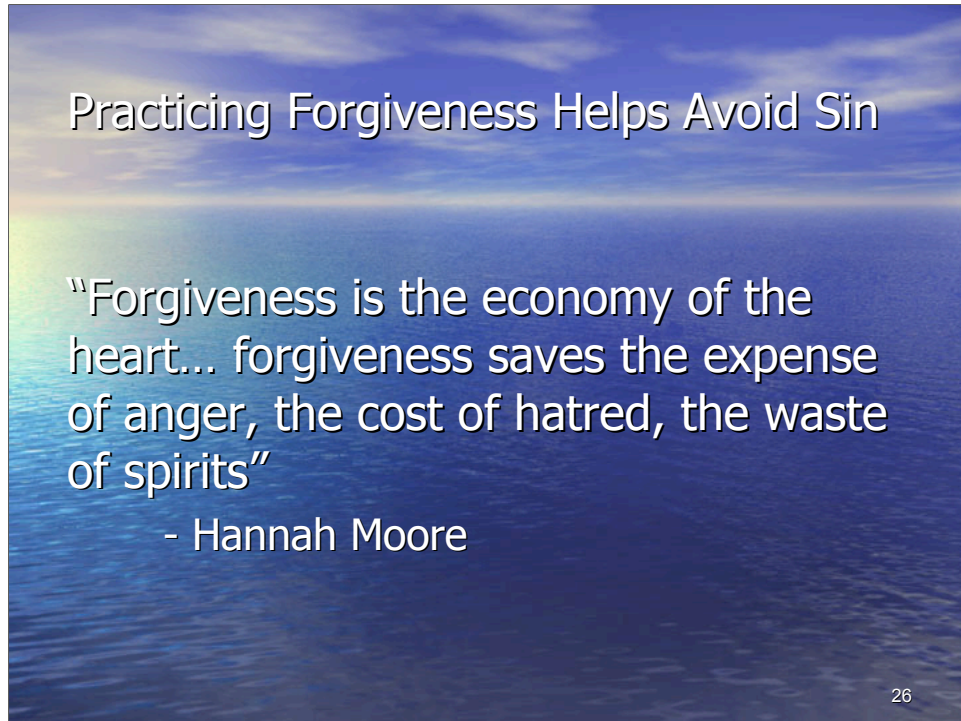
God accomplished this canceling of debt by the death of Christ – Colossians 2:14.

Is It A Sin To Not Forgive?

If we accept that forgiveness is a choice, then not forgiving someone does not mean we are sinning. It may be falling short of the ideal. However, if we abandon any possibility of forgiving, we may fall into the category of this verse: "So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin" – Jas 4:17.

As long as we are receptive to the idea of forgiveness and making progress in trying to come to terms with the notion, we are not sinning.

However, even if it is not a sin in itself, being in a unforgiving state of mind can lead to sin, or promote the likelihood we will sin.



Practicing forgiveness helps you avoid sin

Eg: Adultery – desire to “get back” by doing same thing.

Slander – desire to “get back” by slandering a person or gossiping about them, denigrating them

Living in a state of long-term anger or deep resentment.

Vengeance - Romans 12:17 – “repay no one evil for evil”

Pro 20:22 Do not say, "I will repay evil"; wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you.

1 Pet 3:19

Pro 24:29 Do not say, "I will do to him as he has done to me; I will pay the man back for what he has done."

Justice and Forgiveness

- Do not say, "I will repay evil"; wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you.
– Proverbs 20:22
- With forgiveness there is acknowledgment that there is injustice in life – and a recognition that God will deal with it

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Forgiveness Acknowledges Injustice

With forgiveness there is acknowledgment that there is injustice in life- and a recognition that God will deal with it.

Recognizing that forgiveness is a choice is empowering. It means that you can have control over your anger and resentment.

Example of Joseph

Joseph was rightfully angry. None of us would say: Joseph was wrong for being angry at his brothers, or for wanting revenge, because they left him for dead.

We see this anger in his initial treatment of the brothers – Gen 42:17 (puts them in prison).

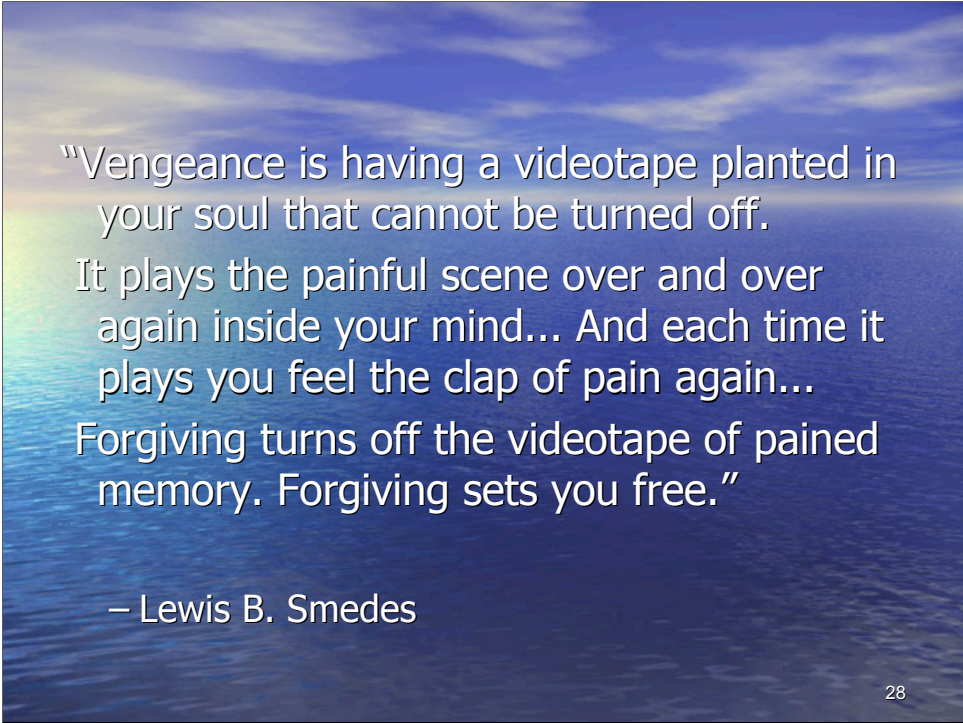
Joseph was a man of great compassion, though – he quickly starts to feel empathy for them – Gen 42:23-24 – “he turned away from them and wept”.

He then proceeds to give them tangible gifts as a demonstration of his love – Gen 43:16-17

Gen 43:30-31 – process of forgiveness continues.

Gen 45:1-15 – further acts of kindness by Joseph. Notice his response is not predicated on their repentance – they didn’t know who he was up to this point, and he doesn’t wait for an apology. Verse 5 in particular is remarkable.

Bro’s don’t ask for forgiveness until after their father’s death, and even then only as an insurance policy – Gen 50:17 (first mention of forgiveness in the Bible – Gen 50:17. (Mention Richard Purkis and JL, and first mention of “love” in Bible)



"Vengeance is having a videotape planted in your soul that cannot be turned off. It plays the painful scene over and over again inside your mind... And each time it plays you feel the clap of pain again... Forgiving turns off the videotape of pained memory. Forgiving sets you free."

– Lewis B. Smedes

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You may accept that forgiveness is a choice in principle, but find yourself in circumstances where you cannot bring yourself to imagine forgiving someone. Many of us have experienced very deep hurts and injustices at the hands of others.

Let's look at some of these:

Hurts Requiring Forgiveness

- Parents:
 - physical, emotional, sexual abuse of children.
 - The offense may be against you or one you deeply love or care about.
- Loved one who has died
- Employers:
 - wrongful dismissal
 - being passed over for promotion
- Teachers:
 - public humiliation
 - emotional abuse.
- Friends:
 - Slander
 - disloyalty

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Hurts requiring forgiveness

Parents: - physical, emotional, sexual abuse of children.

The offense may be against you or one you deeply love or care about.

Loved one: died young. Sometimes spouses or children of deceased parents have unresolved anger. They realize that logically it doesn't make sense, but they are angry at the one who died.

Employers: - wrongful dismissal
- being passed over for promotion

Teachers: - public humiliation/emotional abuse.

Friends: slander or disloyalty

One of key points about our definition is that these are real, not imagined hurts.

Hurts Requiring Forgiveness

- Spouses:
 - distant spouse
 - angry spouse
 - controlling spouse
 - infidelity or adultery
 - sexual deviancy or misconduct
 - irresponsibility
 - drug or alcohol abuse
- Church/Other orgs
 - Disfellowship
 - Disapproval
 - Disunity (eg: reunion)

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Spouses:

distant spouse

angry spouse

controlling spouse

infidelity or adultery

sexual deviancy or misconduct

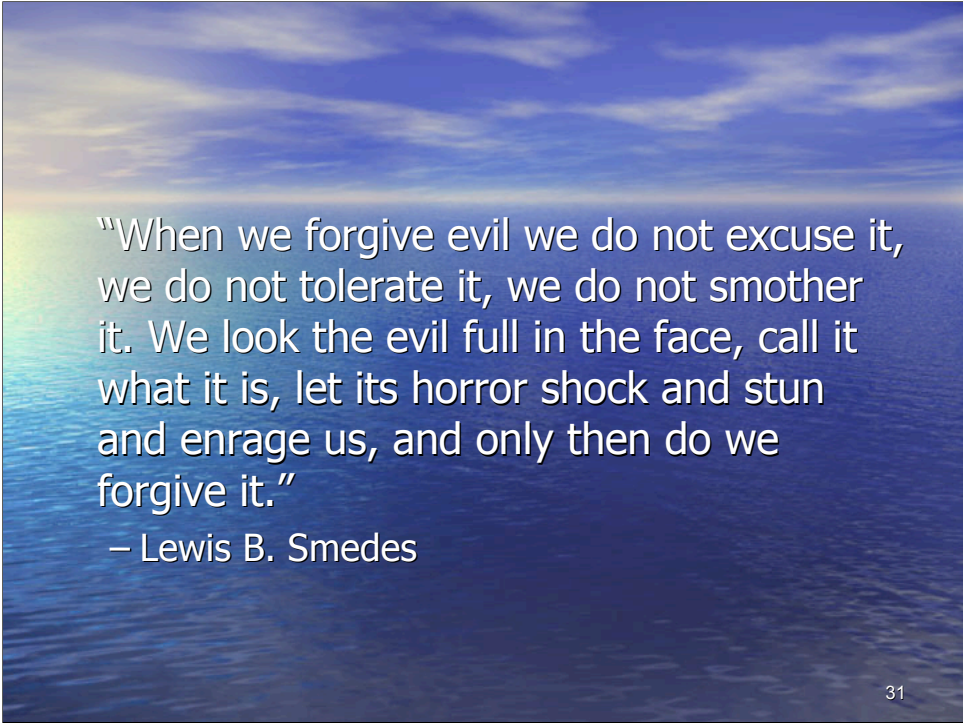
irresponsibility

drug or alcohol abuse

Church/Other orgs - disfellowship

· disapproval

· disunity (eg: reunion)



“When we forgive evil we do not excuse it, we do not tolerate it, we do not smother it. We look the evil full in the face, call it what it is, let its horror shock and stun and enrage us, and only then do we forgive it.”

– Lewis B. Smedes

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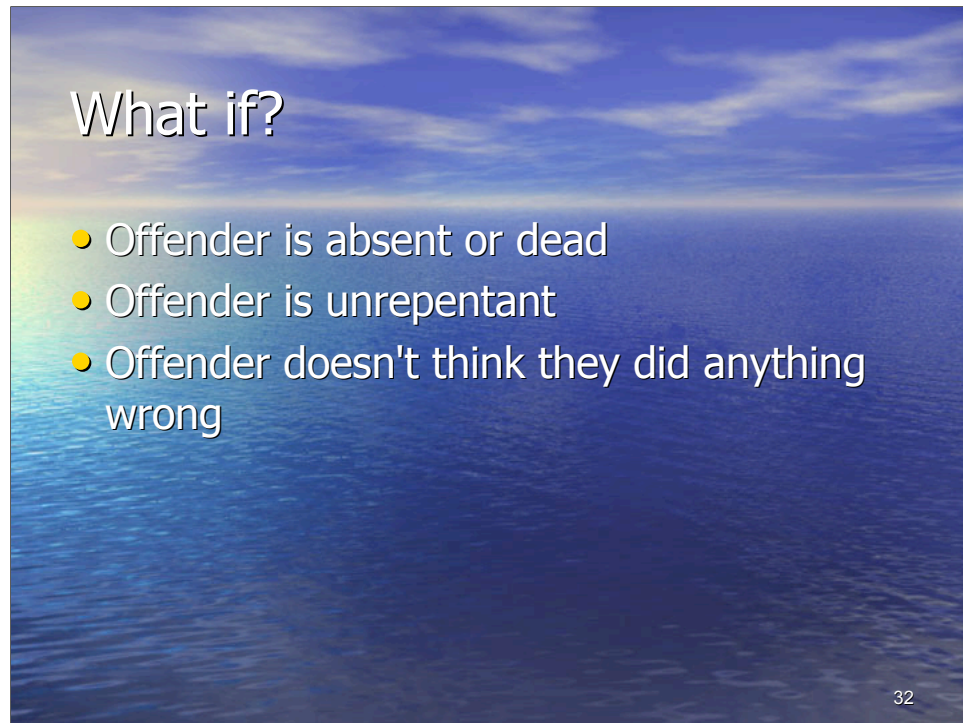
Take time to reflect on whether or not you have been affected, directly or indirectly by some of these hurts. If you have, consider whether you have forgiven those who hurt you. If not, consider the possibility of choosing to forgive.

Class 4 - Forgiveness is Unconditional

This might be a radical concept for some of us. We may believe there must be reconciliation – a mutual admission of wrongdoing (either by one or both parties), that there must be an apology, contrition, repentance and a mutual decision to put away any hurt and anger and start to work on renewing trust and closeness.

Another teaching we may believe is that, even if there is no reconciliation (mutual feelings of good intent and restoration) repentance is required in order to forgive. These are the ideals.

What if this doesn't or can't happen, because:



How, then, can we forgive? It is very frustrating to want to forgive someone and to wait for them to apologize or show remorse for hurting you, and for that remorse to never come.

Forgiveness is Unconditional

- God's forgiveness is not like ours
 - Only God can blot out sin
 - Only God can demand confession and repentance
- Jesus: pray for "forgiveness as we forgive others." (Matt 6:14-15).
- Paul - forgive unconditionally
 - Eph 4:32
 - Col 3:13
- Jesus: "Love your enemies"
 - A paradox.
 - If you love your enemy, they cease to be one.

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Remember: God's forgiveness is not the same as ours. It deals with sin, and because God is righteous, He can and does demand repentance. We are not righteous and we are not blotting out a person's sins, so we can forgive.

Jesus tells us to pray for forgiveness as we forgive others. (Matt 6:14-15). There are no conditions on this.

Paul tells us to forgive unconditionally – Eph 4:32, Col 3:13

God also tells us to love unconditionally. Jesus said "Love your enemies" – this is another paradox. In some ways, if you love your enemy, they cease to be one.

What About Matthew 18?

- Problem: vv. 15 -20
- But:
 - Vv 1 -14 warn of causing “little ones” (ie weak) to “stumble”
 - Serious consequences of causing sin
 - Vv 21 -35 –Need for unconditional, repetitive forgiveness

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What About Matt 18 - Seems To Teach Repentance Must Precede Forgiveness?

The problem verses in particular are vv 15 – 20. I think we often misapply them, or rely on them too rigidly.

First – synopsis of Chapter 18

Whole chapter is on sin and forgiveness

Vv 1 -14: First section – warning about severity of consequences for those who cause ‘little ones’ to stumble – this is stark contrast to message of forgiveness, and shows the balance in Jesus’ teaching. Sin, or causing others to sin, is never to be taken lightly.

Vv 15 -20 – look at in a moment.

Vv 21 – 35 – need for unconditional, repetitive forgiveness.

Special Dispensation

- “Bind and loose” – cp Matt 16:13-20
 - Associated with Pharisees’ self-appointed authority to imprison
 - Eg: Ananias’ opinion of Paul – Acts 9:14
 - Special dispensation for Apostles, disciples:
 - Examples in Acts
 - Ananias and Sapphira – Acts 5:1-11
 - Lame man in temple – Acts 3:2-10
 - Aeneas – Acts 9:32 -35
 - Dorcas – Acts 9:36 -43

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In Matthew 16:13-20 Jesus gives the apostles authority to forgive some things – this is picked up in Matt 18:15-20. In Matt 18, does Jesus imply we have the option not to forgive, or is it not about forgiveness? (ie v. 18 – “bind” vs “loose”).

The terms “bind” and “loose” were terms associated with the scribes and Pharisees who had the (self-appointed) authority to “bind” people or “release” them from certain religious obligations, which could involve actual imprisonment. It is interesting that they should do this, in light of their assertion elsewhere in the gospels that “God alone can forgive sins,” yet they had no qualms about carrying out their own form of justice. Paul, as a Pharisee, had this reputation – so Ananias in Acts 9:14 alludes to it: “here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name” (ESV).

Jesus is using these terms in this same sense (formal religious organizational context).

I believe this was special dispensation to apostles/1st C disciples, to whom Jesus gave special authority- just like ability to heal as a witness to resurrection

– John 20: 22-23 proves this.

-Acts has practical examples of this

Ananias and Sapphira - Acts 5:1-11 -see espec vv 3 and 9.

The lame man in the temple - Acts 3:2-10 - see espec v. 6.

Aeneas - Acts 9:32 -35 - see espec v.34

Dorcas - Acts 9:36 - 43

Context is Ecclesial strife

- Matt 18:15 "If your brother sins against you"
 - NIV footnote: "against you not in some texts"
 - NASB: omits it and notes "late ms have"
- Context is ecclesial – leading others astray
 - Consistent with Acts examples
 - "Bind and loose" – ecclesial (Matt 16) – "upon this rock I will build my church"
 - Earlier: causing "little ones" to "stumble"
 - Idea is divisiveness – see Romans 16:17-20
 - "Stumbling block" or "offense" – sw in Greek (skandalon) as in Matt 18:7

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Matt 18:15 -35 – NIV has a footnote that "against you" is not in some texts and NASB omits it, and notes 'late ms have' - so without this phrase, we can have a whole different meaning. In light of the use of "bind" and "loose" it seems to have an ecclesial context, consistent with the examples from Acts cited above. Also remember that the context in which "bind" and "loose" were first used in Matt 16 was with regards to establishment of the ecclesia – "upon this rock I will build my church".

Also, earlier context in Matt 18 is causing "little ones" to sin (or stumble) (v.6). – the idea is divisiveness- see Romans 16:17-20. v17 – word "stumbling block" or "offense" is sw in Greek (skandalon) as in Matt 18:7.

More...

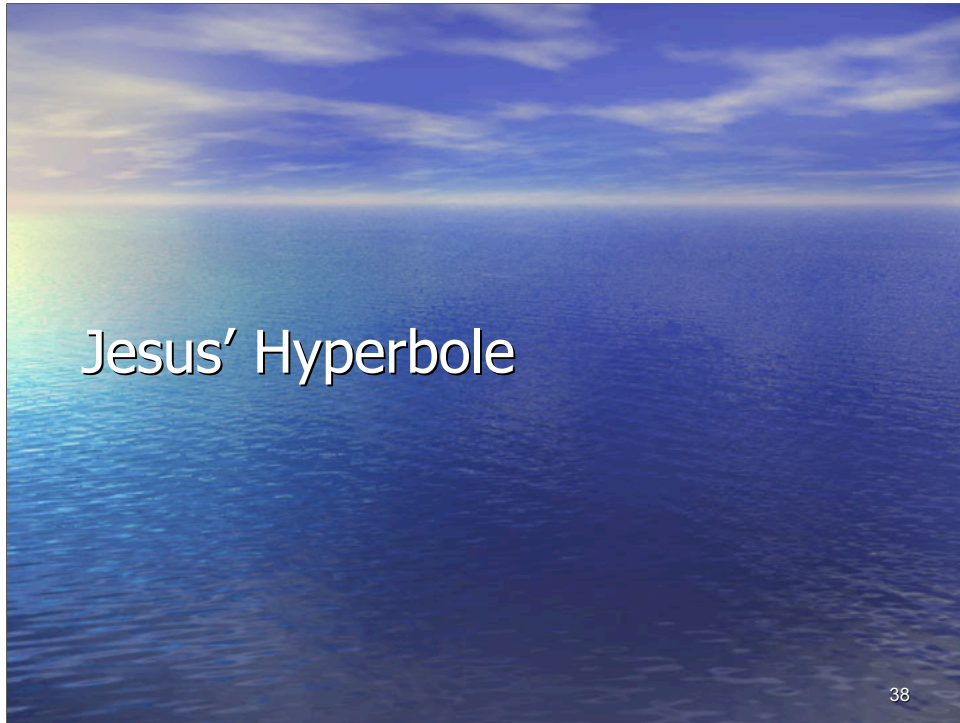
- 1 Tim 1:19 -20
 - Paul tried Matthew 18 with Hymenaeus and Alexander to no avail
- Matt 18:21-22
 - Peter “If someone sins against me” – not disputed that “against me” is in text here
 - Moved from ecclesial to personal issues
 - Jesus: forgive 70 X 7 – different response than 18:15-20

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Paul’s comments to Timothy re Hymenaeus and Alexander seem to be a case where he tried to apply Jesus’ instructions to no avail – 1 Tim 1:19-20.

Matt 18:21 - Peter asks “if someone sins against me” – it’s not disputed that these words (“against me”) are in the Greek. At this point, Peter has moved from ecclesial (or group) legislation to personal. It’s as if he is saying, “ok – I understand how we are supposed to deal with divisive elements in an ecclesial context. But what about personal offenses?”

Matt 18:21-22 - Jesus tells us to forgive 70 x 7



Jesus' Hyperbole

"Millstone around your neck"

"Better to have your hand cut off"

"Take the beam out of your eye"

"Camel through the eye of a needle"

"Shirt off your back"

These are deliberately ridiculous images or comparisons designed to make a point-similar to "an eye for an eye" – a contrast in Jesus' teaching versus the law of Moses. In either case, the issue being addressed is one of justice- one is exact retribution, in the case of 70 X 7 it involves forgiveness.

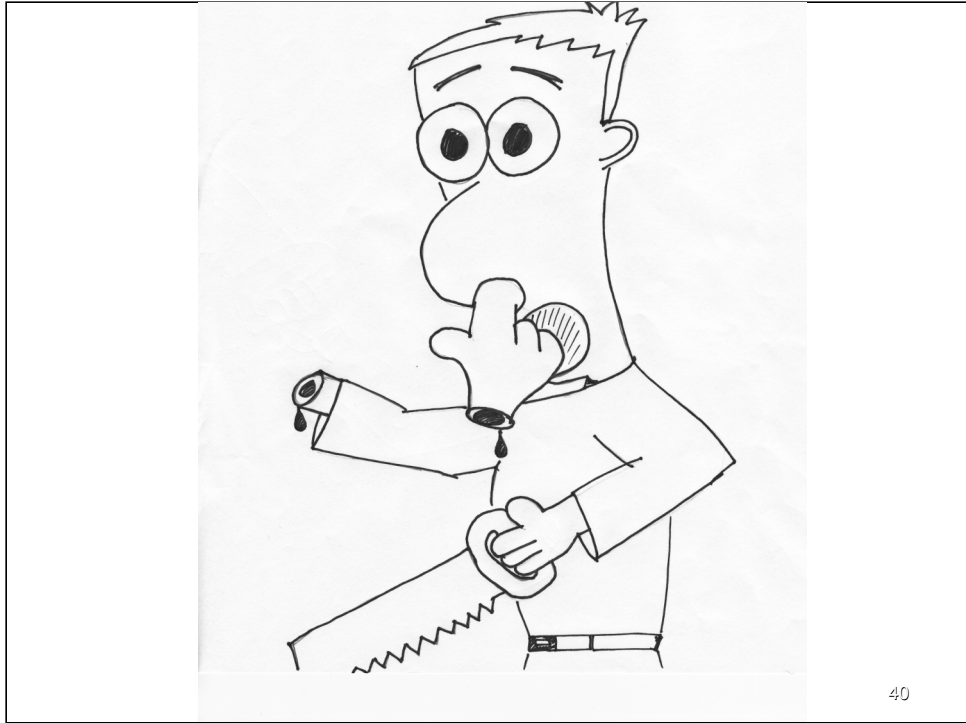
Luke 17:1-4 parallel passage

Does this teach that repentance is required for forgiveness? Or, that forgiveness is required where there is repentance? (ie forgiveness is always a choice, but there is an even more compelling case for it when someone is repentant).

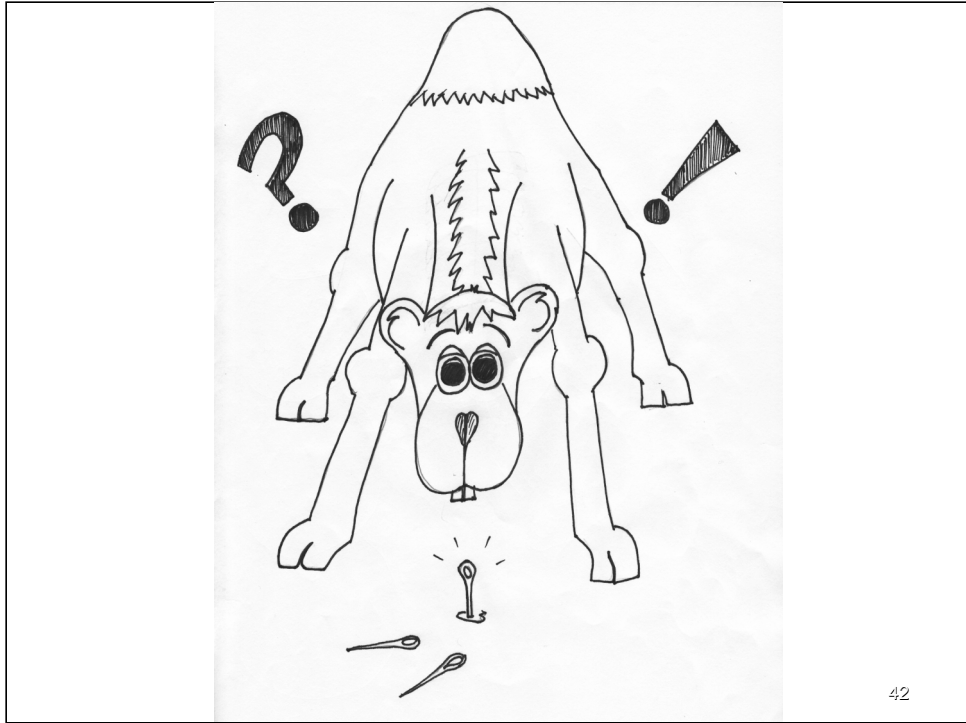
70 times a day.

The point is that Jesus is using hyperbole. He is being deliberately absurd. The number (490) is such that this situation would never occur in real life- no one would sin and repent 490 times. It's supposed to teach us unconditional forgiveness – there must be no limits to it.











Matthew 18:15 -20

- Principle of honest communication valid
 - Colossians 3:9
 - Ephesians 4:25
- Principle of 2 or 3 witnesses valid
 - 2 Cor 13 :1-2, 10
 - 1 Tim 5:19-20

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Matt 18:15 -20

directly confronting one another is still a legitimate principle, even if this is not the context here. It is taught in:

Col 3:9 - 3:9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

And Eph 4:25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

-The principle of using 2 or 3 witnesses is also sanctioned by Paul:

2 Cor 13:1-2 – v. 10 again seems to put it in the context of ecclesial unity.

1 Tim 5:19-20. – charge against an elder – same idea- ecclesial, not personal context.

Interesting OT Parallel

Ct the 70 x 7 to Lev 26:28 God will “Chastise” Israel seven times for their sin!

God’s justice involves forgiveness, not punishment – this is whole point of Romans 3:23-25 (review).

Matthew 18:35

"So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

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Conclusion

Matt 18:15-20 is special case related to ecclesial matters. Personal forgiveness is still unconditional

The last verse of chapter 18 places the onus on the one needing to forgive – summarizing the parable before this.

v. 35 "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

Forgiveness Takes Time

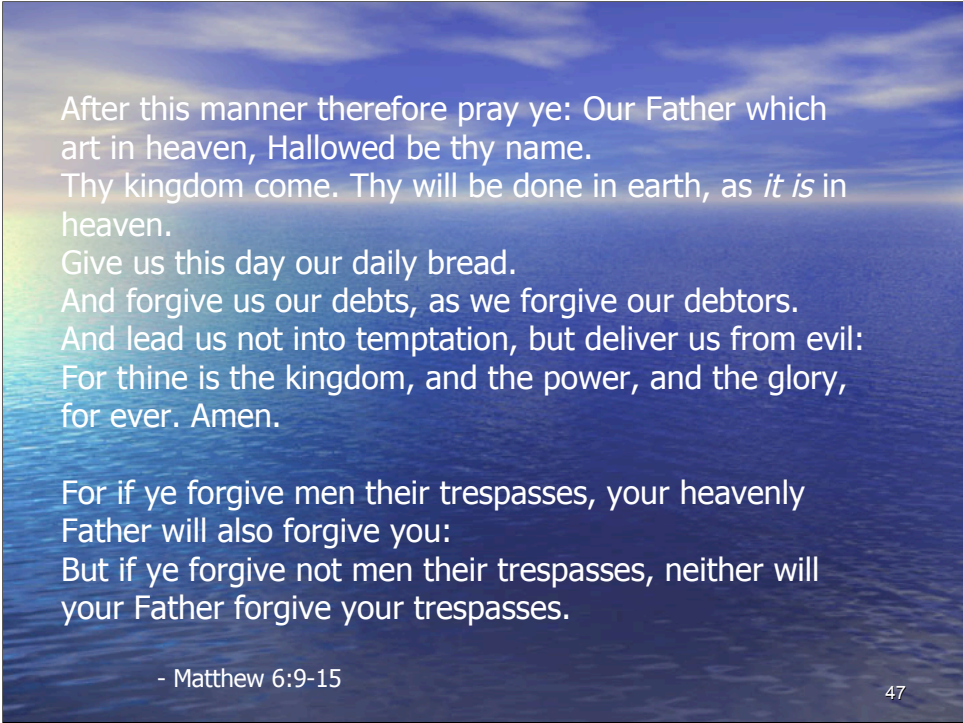
- “In the Bible it says they asked Jesus how many times you should forgive, and he said 70 times 7. Well, I want you all to know that I'm keeping a chart.”
- Hillary Rodham Clinton

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Forgiveness Takes Time and Can Be an Ongoing Process

Matt 18:21-22 - Forgive seventy times seven – does the offense recur, or the need to forgive? Ie – forgiveness is an ongoing process and practice – just like other aspects of our spiritual growth, it's a never-ending job. You might find you experience recurrences of anger and resentment that require you to forgive again.

By the same token, we have already seen that forgiveness is difficult. If we are in the position of needing to be forgiven, we cannot demand that forgiveness. We must be patient and humble with regards to the offended person. We cannot use the doctrine of forgiveness as a means of attempting to manipulate others by imposing some sort of reverse guilt complex – “You must forgive me, I've repented, etc.”



After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:
But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

- Matthew 6:9-15

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Praying For Forgiveness

Praying for forgiveness should be a part of our daily worship. It's in the Lord's prayer, which teaches us what to pray for daily.

Consider this – you may do a good job in your prayers of thinking about the sins you've committed (Or good you've omitted) – but do you spend time thinking about people you are forgiving? Next time, don't just say in your prayer “as I forgive others”, but think about a specific offense and choose to think of forgiving the offender. This will probably help you appreciate how much God has forgiven you.

Perhaps it's incorrect (or at least inaccurate) for us to pray for forgiveness for our weaknesses – God knows them. However, character is shaped by behavior and understanding – what we are is, to a large extent, framed and molded by how we behave, and how we think – our frame of reference, or our world view. For example, some people are impulsive or hot-tempered by nature, while others are slower to react emotionally to conflict. The manifestations of this might be that the hot-tempered person sometimes is excessively and intensely angry, while the more even-keeled person may respond by becoming withdrawn and distant, or emotionally aloof, cutting off effective communication. In either case, the specific behavior may or may not be sinful. (In fairness, the person who behaves angrily is probably on more shaky ground Biblically – there are far more injunctions against anger than sullenness.) It is possible, though, for both people to curb and control their bad behavior without fundamentally changing their characters. The impulsive person can learn to control his/her impulses in various ways, including prayer for strength to resist these impulses, behavior modification such as time-outs and better understanding – being educated on the negative impacts of angry outbursts, etc. The same is true for the even-keeled person – through prayer for courage, perhaps; behavior modification such as clearer direct verbal communication and better understanding – being educated on the negative impacts of emotional distance, etc. Both people can and should ask God for forgiveness for their specific sinful actions (and/or thoughts). They can then work on mitigating their personal weaknesses by practicing stopping the sinful behavior. Over time, if they are successful at this, their characters will be shaped to be more Christlike.

This is probably why Jesus talks about ‘forgive us our trespasses’ in Matt 6:14 – 15. - not our 'weaknesses', but specific offenses.

-The word ‘trespass’ in Greek literally means ‘side slip,’ or ‘lapse, deviation’ – either accidental or intentional. Trespasses are actions involving deviating from a Divinely established course of acceptable behavior and thought, not character weaknesses.

“Trespases” – see Romans 4:25. This passage is a direct commentary on Psalm 32, which we looked at briefly in an earlier class:

Romans 4 and Psalm 32

Romans 4:7 -8 (citing Psalm 32)	Romans 4:25
Blessed are those whose lawless deeds (AV: iniquities) are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.	Who was delivered up for our trespases (sw - Matt 6:14)
blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin	And raised for our justification

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Jesus was delivered to death because of our sins – he bore our sins in his body on the cross. His resurrection to life provided forgiveness (justification) of those sins.

Transformation Through Forgiveness

- Forgiveness is a moral virtue and the expression of it is good. Therefore:
 - “the act of forgiving eventually may form a part of the person’s identity as he or she practices forgiveness, knows it is good, and realizes that forgiveness is not some quality that exists independently of the self or even outside the self but is part of who one is.”
 - Helping Clients Forgive, Robert Enright, p 253ff.
- Consider: Romans 12:2 – “be ye transformed by the renewal of your mind”
 - -involves understanding.

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We already stated forgiveness is hard. There are many obstacles that can make it difficult. However, since forgiveness is always a choice, they can be overcome- even if we cannot imagine considering that possibility at present. And when we practice it, we are transformed.

Forgiveness is a moral virtue and the expression of it is good. Therefore:

“the act of forgiving eventually may form a part of the person’s identity as he or she practices forgiveness, knows it is good, and realizes that forgiveness is not some quality that exists independently of the self or even outside the self but is part of who one is.” From Helping Clients Forgive, Robert Enright, p 253ff.

Consider: Romans 12:2 – “be ye transformed by the renewal of your mind” -involves understanding.

Obstacles to Forgiveness

- Severity of offence, producing deep-seated hurt (even if offender is repentant).
- Offender is absent or dead
- Offender is unrepentant
- Offender doesn't think they did anything wrong
- Victim is entrenched in anger or resentment
- Victim thinks forgiveness requires repentance, and is waiting for that repentance before forgiving.
- Victim thinks forgiveness is not their responsibility (ie it's up to God to forgive) - usually because they were not the direct victim
- Victim thinks forgiveness is a weapon - place them in a position of power over the offender (eg: "I forgive you, even though you are a despicable human being")
- Victim thinks forgiveness is beyond their ability to forgive
- Victim thinks forgiving requires trusting or submission or condoning of offender's wrong behavior
- Victim thinks forgiving is an all-or-nothing proposition
- Victim's fear of vulnerability

Review of Definition of Human forgiveness

This class will consider this aspect of forgiveness – abandoning resentment and anger, showing compassion and extending mercy.

Changing your perspective

- Abandon resentment and anger
- Show compassion
- Extend mercy.
- Our definition of forgiveness:

"People, upon rationally determining that they have been unfairly treated, forgive when they willfully abandon resentment and related responses (to which they have a right), and **endeavor to respond to the wrongdoer based on the moral principle of beneficence, which may include compassion, unconditional worth, generosity, and moral love** (to which the wrongdoer, by nature of the hurtful act or acts, has no right)."

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Abandoning Resentment

Back to one of key passages on forgiveness:

Eph 3:31-32 "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all **malice**. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. "

Note several words used to describe similar things to resentment – eg: bitterness.

Malice – malignity of spirit.

See also -

- Col 3:8, 12-13 "But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, **malice**, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ...

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. "

Tit 3:3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in **malice** and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

Jas 1:19-21 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness (**malice** – sw) and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

1 Pet 2:1 So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.

Changing our perspective:

- the global perspective on forgiveness:
- 1 John 1-2 : “not for us only but for the whole world also”
- potential for everyone to be forgiven.

Therefore everyone is worthy as human beings to have us potentially forgive them-
therefore, we can consider it a possibility

Once we give up anger and resentment, we can try to move towards the offender.

Expressing Kindness

- It's not enough to say:
 - "I've moved on"
 - "I just let go"
 - "I really don't care one way or the other"
 - "It doesn't bother me anymore"
 - "Time has dulled the sense of injustice"
- Cool Ambivalence, indifference or truce is not kindness

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Expression of kindness:

-Remind about Adam and Eve- God's kindness in providing the covering.

So here, instead of focusing on the mechanics of forgiveness and restoration we focus on God's kindness and generosity. This same principle of kindness is core to how we forgive.

It's not enough to say:

"I've moved on"

"I just let go"

"I really don't care one way or the other"

"It doesn't bother me anymore"

"Time has dulled the sense of injustice"

– these can simply be declarations of truce, or cool ambivalence to someone, feeling neutral. Instead, kindness involves the extension of positive feelings and actions towards an offender.

Making An Emotional Shift

- Lev 19:17-18: "you shall not hate your brother in your heart" - "shall not take vengeance"
- "Or bear a grudge" - see also v. 16.
- Eph 4:32 "Be kind to one another, **tenderhearted**, ("well-compassioned") forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. " (ESV)
- Col 3:12-14 "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, **compassionate hearts**, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. "

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Responding Based on Principle of Beneficence

Showing compassion or practicing mercy requires making an emotional shift towards the person. Consider:

- Lev 19:17-18: "you shall not hate your brother in your heart" - law was concerned about internals as well as externals (contrary to what we often think).
- "shall not take vengeance"
- "Or bear a grudge" - see also v. 16.
- Eph 4:32 "Be kind to one another, **tenderhearted**, ("well-compassioned") forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. " (ESV)
- Col 3:12-14 "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, **compassionate hearts**, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. "

Forgiveness involves seeing the person in a different light. Forgiveness is not an excuse for wrong behavior but an acknowledgment that, despite wrong behavior, I can show compassion and extend mercy towards that person. – ie not try to change or influence them or punish them with my anger/resentment/avoidance, etc.

Compassion

- Compassion involves understanding
- Knowledge is not equivalent to understanding
 - Eg:
 - I know $E = mc^2$
 - I don't understand it!

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What is compassion?

Compassion is different than sympathy. With sympathy, we share emotionally with someone's pain, without necessarily understanding it.

With compassion, there is understanding. It is the ability to put yourself in the other person's shoes. Understanding is different than knowledge – for example, you may know the formula for Einstein's theory of relativity is $E = mc^2$. But do you understand it? This is the same with people lives and circumstances- we may know that someone has a problem with alcohol, for example – and feel a certain degree of sympathy for them. On the other hand, we may understand their problem if we've ever been drunk and enjoyed it – or found it lessened emotional pain. The miracle of Christ's example is that He had an understanding of people – He knew what was in their hearts, as John says, and He had compassion for the people – understood their plight – yet without having to sin in order to do so.

Likewise, the trick for us is to develop an understanding of people's sins or struggles without having to repeat them ourselves. This requires becoming more aware of the circumstances of their lives- what their childhood was like, what pressures bear on them now, what things they are afraid of, etc. This does not excuse their behavior – it provides us with a context in which to consider it and to mitigate our negative feelings towards the person.

What is Mercy?

In legal terms it is a shortening or complete commutation of a sentence designed to punish. Criminal sentences are generally designed to server four purposes:

1. Protection of society
2. Reformation of the offender
3. Punishment
4. Deterrence

We tend to impose punishments on people when we feel unforgiving towards them. The “sentences” we impose on others when we hold a grudge against them (or refuse to forgive) fall into these same four categories.

For example:

Protection of society – we warn others of just how bad someone is. In some cases this is justified (eg pedophilia). But do we confine our comments on their character to the issue at hand, or does it become all-embracing – eg: “Joe is a dangerous person”.

Reformation of the offender – we ignore them, or treat them with emotional distance or coldness, or angrily challenge them – in order to get them to change.

Punishment – we show our anger/resentment in various ways, or exclude them from our’s or other’s company

Deterrence – we tell others about our anger/hurt with the person – in an effort, perhaps, to campaign for our cause and to prevent others from hurting us in the same way.

The exercise of mercy is essentially a commutation of the sentence and therefore a disannulling of these 4 goals (which, anyway, we can only achieve with limited success). For example, if we express our disapproval or anger towards someone it may have an effect for a period of time, but after a while they will stop being in our company to avoid that anger and disappointment. We may be effective initially in garnering sympathy for our position, but inevitably people will, in effect, tell us to get over it- they will tire of pitying us, no matter what. This is part of the victim-rescuer-persecutor triangle of interaction:

-victim: one sinned against.

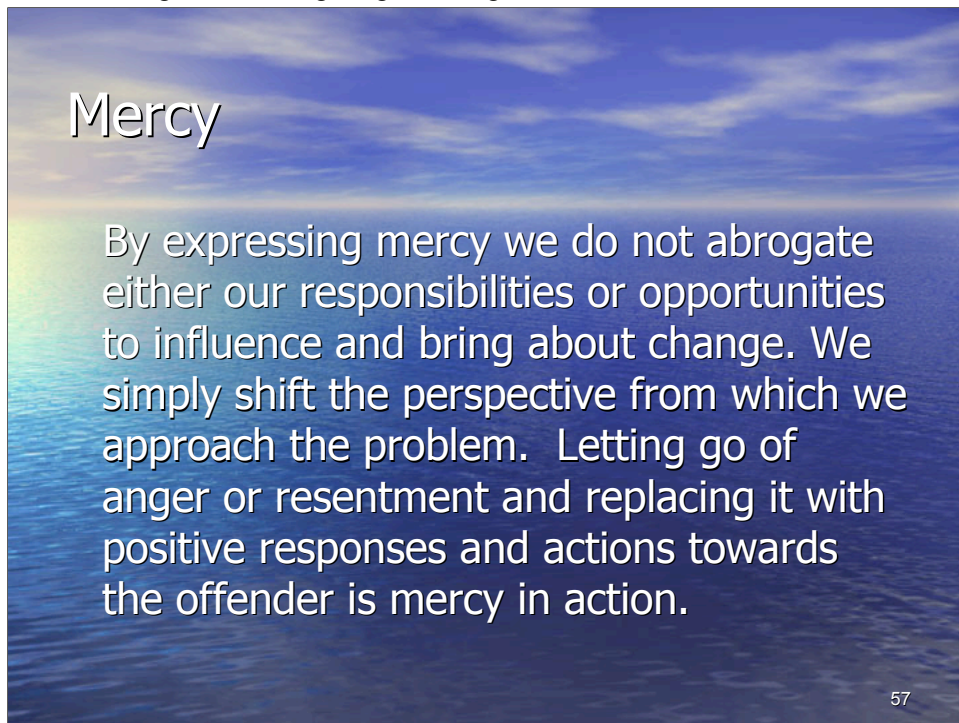
-persecutor: one doing the sinning.

-rescuer: one who comes to the aid of the victim. They intervene in the possible reconciliation process, and usually having a negative effect on the problem.

Mercy – mercy deals with the issues of the offender’s sinful behavior in an almost counter-intuitive way. It does not involve trying to change either the character or the behavior of the person through engaging that person in a persuasive argument or by imposing a punishment. In fact, it’s the very opposite of this. Think again about a criminal’s offence and the sentence being commuted. This flies in the face of the very purpose of public punishment, which is designed to correct (that’s why we call them ‘correctional facilities’).

The general reaction from the public, when someone has their sentence commuted, is “what sort of deterrence is that?” or “Where is justice?”

However –even though acts of mercy do not directly engage in persuasive reasoning or attempts to change behavior, they can bring about change – by the mere expression of that mercy. In other words, if you display a merciful attitude/perspective, the perpetrator can respond in one of many ways to you – one way might be to show contrition, repentance – an acknowledgment of wrongdoing. Or it might not!



By expressing mercy we do not abrogate either our responsibilities or opportunities to influence and bring about change. We simply shift the perspective from which we approach the problem. Letting go of anger or resentment and replacing it with positive responses and actions towards the offender is mercy in action.

Mercy and kindness

- Jas 2:12-13 “For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. **Mercy triumphs over judgment.**”
- Rom 2:4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's **kindness** is meant to lead you to repentance?

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“to lead”

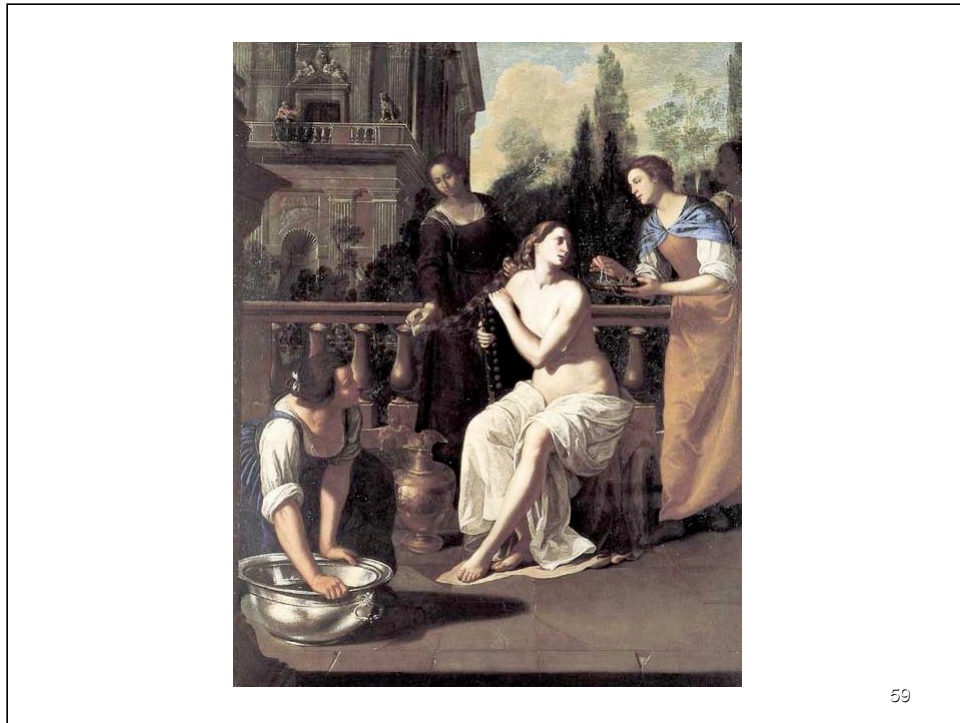
– fairly common word (71 times) often of leading a captive to trial or prison – Jesus led to Caiphas, Pilate, Herod, etc. – “led like a lamb to the slaughter”, (Acts 8:36) – also of Paul’s encounters with Roman authorities towards end of Acts.

- Other references:

Rom 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Gal 5:18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

From this we understand that God’s kindness is meant to be a dynamic, powerful influence, directing us to repentance – touching our consciences, shaping the direction of our lives to serve God faithfully.



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Psalm 51 – David understood God’s mercy when asking for forgiveness:

Psa 51:1-3 “To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. “

Look at what David asks for – not a cancellation of any sentence, or of the consequences for his sin. Instead, he asks for a complete change of heart. He continued to live with Bathsheba, but appears to be willing to bear the consequences of this sin. We see this in his reaction to the first child’s death.

As we stated in the first class, this is one reason why God forgives sin – to bring about a transformation in character.

We have spoken about the need to abandon anger and resentment. Anger can be a powerful motivating force. Consider Nathan’s parable to David- he instills anger in David. Nathan exacerbates the sense of injustice – (why we refer to bad things people do to us as “unfair” treatment). God uses David’s anger to teach him about the gravity of his offense against Uriah and Bathsheba. And, his anger motivated him to repentance.

(recap parable of the lamb – 2 Sam 12: 1- 5.)

The parable was also designed to engender compassion in David. It succeeded -

2 Sam 12:6 – David says: “And because he had no pity” – the very thing David was asking for from God! And, notice that David is angry – the typical reaction of one who has been hurt by another.

Forgiveness is a miracle

Article on Reena Virk's killer:

(The Virk family are East Indians, and Jehovah's witnesses – "a minority within a minority," as one reporter put it).

From The Globe and Mail

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Man in Virk killing gets day parole

ARMINA LIGAYA

With a report from CTV and Canadian Press

June 22, 2007

VANCOUVER -- One of seven teens who beat a 14-year-old Victoria girl and then dragged her to the water to drown has been granted day parole.

Warren Glowatski, who was convicted in 1999 of second-degree murder in the death of Reena Virk, will be transferred from prison to an undisclosed halfway house for the next six months.

Reena's parents, Suman and Manjit Virk, testified at the National Parole Board hearing in support of Mr. Glowatski, saying they believe he has changed.

"I think at that time he was an angry, scared little kid," Suman Virk, Reena's mother, told reporters after the hearing. "Today, I think he's a young man who has taken responsibility for his actions and is trying to amend the wrong that he did."

On Nov. 14, 1997, Mr. Glowatski and six other teens swarmed Reena, kicking her as many as 18 times in the head. According to trial testimony, Mr. Glowatski and Kelly Ellard followed Reena over a bridge, beat her unconscious, and held her head underwater while they shared a cigarette.

Mr. Glowatski was sentenced to life with no parole eligibility for seven years. However, in July of 2006, the National Parole Board granted Mr. Glowatski unescorted temporary passes, citing his demonstrated remorse, empathy and a sound understanding of his crime.

Mr. Glowatski was granted day parole based on his behaviour at Ferndale minimum-security prison in Mission, B.C., his performance in treatment programs, and risk to the public, said Debra Kihara, national parole board spokeswoman.

When the hearing ended, Mr. Glowatski thanked the Virks personally and hugged Ms. Virk.

Manjit Virk also gave Mr. Glowatski some advice on how to handle himself once he leaves prison.

"[I told him to] stick with good things, wholesome associations, activities and keep his mind busy with good things, and hopefully he will be successful," he said after the hearing.

The gesture was difficult, Reena's mother said, because the pain and grief remains. However, she was glad to see Mr. Glowatski take responsibility for his actions.

"That is what we would have hoped," she said. "That somebody would have learned something from this whole thing ... and out of all of the accused in the whole process, he's the only one that's done that."

Yesterday's hearing was difficult, Mr. Virk said, having to relive the details of their daughter's death. But, he said, they've decided to leave those feelings behind.

"We want to basically support him now, because we want him to be a productive member [of society]," Mr. Virk said. "And if our coming here, if it can affect him a little bit or if he feels that he needed that support and he can be a better person, for us it's worth it."

Ms. Virk said going through the legal process and the parole hearings have helped them to understand the reasons behind Reena's tragic death.

"I think it helps us understand that a lot of kids don't have the support and the nurturing and guidance early on in their lives," she said. "That was a big factor here. A lot of these kids were from broken homes."

And, Ms. Virk added, they've been able to forgive Mr. Glowatski.

"I think the most important reason why we've forgiven Warren is so we can just put this whole matter aside and for our own healing and sense of wholeness," she said. "For that, it's an imperative part of going on with our lives."

Article on the Amish killings:

By STEVE SCHEDIN

For the Daily Record/Sunday News

York Daily Record/Sunday News Article Launched: 07/12/2007 05:57:42 AM EDT Jul 12, 2007 — From all over the world, “the question became, ‘How can the Amish extend forgiveness so quickly?’” In October, 32-year-old Charles Carl Roberts IV barricaded himself in an Amish one-room schoolhouse in Nickel Mines and killed five girls, shooting them execution-style as police stormed the building. Five other girls were wounded. Roberts then killed himself. Kraybill is a professor and senior fellow at the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College. (He) more than three dozen Amish families in researching the book. He found three expressions of Amish forgiveness. The first is words, he told the Rotary group. Some of the Amish men spoke with the killer's widow and her parents and told them they did not hold any grudges toward her or her children. The second is the informal expression of forgiveness, or “gracefulness,” which goes “beyond words.” These are gifts, such as meals, for the killer's widow and her three children. “This is when forgiveness trumps the tragedy,” Kraybill said. The third is financial support. The Nickle Mines Accountability Committee decided to use some of the \$4 million it received in donations not only for the medical costs for the five surviving girls but to also provide financially for the killer's widow and children. “It is forgiveness not only in words but actions to bring reconciliation to all the families,” Kraybill said. For three months after the killings, the killer's family and the Amish families extended themselves to visit regularly. This is what Kraybill defines as the “act of grace.” Kraybill explained that this Amish forgiveness shocked the outside world. But this is a “standard forgiveness” explained in the Lord's Prayer that is silently said often during the day in English and German by the Amish. One Amish man explained to Kraybill, “It is not that we do not want justice.” The Amish believe in punishment but also in “giving up feelings of retaliation. We are making a commitment to forgive, but it is a long process,” the man said. “Forgiveness is not forgetting, and this will be part of Amish history for a long time,” Kraybill said.

Forgiveness is a Miracle

- "Which is easier to say: "your sins are forgiven" or to say "rise, take up your bed and walk"?"
- God's forgiveness to us is as miraculous an act as healing!
- When we practice forgiveness in our lives we emulate these miracles
- The act of forgiveness is life-transforming, like a miracle in our own lives.

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"Which is easier to say: "your sins are forgiven" or to say "rise, take up your bed and walk"? God's forgiveness to us is as miraculous an act as healing! Jesus confirms this: "that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth".

- When we practice forgiveness in our lives we emulate these miracles - the act of forgiveness is life-transforming, like a miracle in our own lives.

God Reached Out To Us First

- 1Jn 4:10 "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."



Comforted by His Son

- 1 Jn 2:1-2 “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

Transformed from Death to Life

- 1Pe 2:24 "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. "

Personal Response of Gratitude

- Gal 2:20 “And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ”

Kept from sin, counted righteous, in God's presence for ever

- Jude 24-25 "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. "