

Biblical Forgiveness

Ray Foucher

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Biblical Forgiveness:

Are There Two Types?

Ray Foucher

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1. Biblical Forgiveness: Are There Two Types?

Are you seeking forgiveness? Have you ever struggled with knowing whether or not God has forgiven you? In your relationship with God, do you feel forgiven? Or do you feel guilt and shame? Do you know what the effects are of guilty feelings on emotional health? They are not good. Forgiveness and health are definitely related. Guilt produces emotional pain and can even result in physical disease. If you are struggling to know how to overcome guilt, then forgiveness is something you need to understand and seek after.



How do you think God regards you when you sin? Is He upset? Does He have to be appeased or reconciled to you? Do you beg God to forgive you? Do you ever wonder if He does forgive you? In the world, and even in most of Christianity, there is confusion over this topic.

If you do feel shame and are carrying a load of guilt, a burden you would dearly like to be rid of, this study of forgiveness will provide answers. Biblical forgiveness is the real solution to guilt, and understanding how forgiveness works, especially from God's perspective, can be a great help.

A Two-party Transaction

Let's start by examining what guilt is because it is the existence of guilt that requires forgiveness. A dictionary definition of guilt might be something like: "the fact or state of having done wrong." However, guilt is much more than a fact or state of being. Feelings are very much involved. Usually, there is a feeling of estrangement or separation from the one we have wronged. We feel as though we are out of favor with them and suppose that they must feel

anger toward us. It becomes difficult to be around the person we have wronged because we feel shame in their presence. Reconciliation between the two parties involved is needed to heal the separation.

Think about your own experiences with guilt and forgiveness and you will realize that forgiveness is indeed a two-party transaction. There are always at least two individuals involved. With God, we tend to think that we ask for forgiveness and, if God feels like it, He forgives us and only then has forgiveness happened. However, the process is a little more involved than that. This beautiful truth will give you a much better understanding of forgiveness, will make you feel better about the process, and will help you considerably in dealing with feelings of guilt.

Let's compare a few verses that use forgiveness:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive (*aphiemi*, Strong's G863) us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

The word "if" in that verse makes forgiveness sound very conditional as it is normally understood to be. Now consider this:

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving (*charizomai*, Strong's G5483) one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven (*charizomai*) you." (Eph 4:31-32)

The Ephesians were described as being forgiven even while they still had a number of evil traits of character. The absence of an "if" also indicates that this was unconditional forgiveness.

Why the difference? Is forgiveness conditional or not? The problem is that translations of words from original languages sometimes do not retain all of the original meaning. This has happened here. There is a Greek word, *charizomai*, that refers to forgiveness as felt by the forgiver, the one doing the forgiving. The forgiver chooses to not hold on to hard feelings and to release the forgivee from any degree of indebtedness, perhaps personally absorbing some loss as a result.

On the other side, there is the Greek word, *aphiemi*, that describes what is happening within the forgivee, the person being forgiven. If he chooses to accept forgiveness, he is released from feelings of guilt and shame and of being required to pay back. Clearly, forgiveness is both given and received. We can understand that from our own experience. Forgiveness is a two-party transaction (both given and received) between two parties (forgiver and forgivee) each involved in the process in a different way.

Forgiveness Granted

God loves everyone far more than we can imagine. He always forgives every sin in the sense that He does not hold our sins against us. He is not angry with us. He does not love or care for us any less because of anything we have done. In a deeper way than we can comprehend, God understands that sin hurts and damages us. He pities us and longs for us to turn to Him and allow Him to cure us of our sin-sickness. Scripture says:

"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." (Luke 6:36)

If mercy is a character quality of our heavenly Father, He is not ever going to be unmerciful. Another expression - "His mercy endureth for ever" occurs 41 times in the King James Version. For example:

"O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever." (Psa 118:29)

Whether you feel it or not, whether you even know it or not, God forgives you - always.

Forgiveness granted by God is described by the word *charizomai* (G5483):

Uses (in KJV): forgive 11; give 6; freely give 2; deliver 2; grant 1; frankly forgive 1. Total: 23.

Meanings:

- to do something pleasant or agreeable (to one), to do a favor
- to gratify
- to show one's self gracious, kind, benevolent
- to grant forgiveness, to pardon
- to give graciously, give freely, bestow

This word is derived from the Greek word *charis*, a noun which means grace, good-will, loving-kindness, and favor. It's the same word used in this famous Bible verse:

"For by grace [*charis*] are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Eph 2:8-9)

Is it because of our works that we are forgiven and saved? No, it is purely by God being full of grace (*charis*), and freely-offering forgiveness.

Forgiveness Received

You don't have to earn forgiveness from God, you merely have to accept it. When you realize your sin, confess (admit) it and believe that God forgives you and will impart His love and acceptance to cleanse that sin – then you will feel forgiven. What happens on your side of the forgiveness process—in your heart—is described by the word *aphiemi*, the meaning of which is to "set free," or "release" from sin and its associated guilt. This is something we must accept in our minds because God (Who freely grants forgiveness) will not force us to accept it - He is not into mind manipulation. Any blockage is not God's unwillingness to forgive, but our unwillingness to believe in and accept His forgiveness. God's offer of forgiveness is pleading with us to allow Him to work in our lives. Remember, a child does not have to earn the love of his parents; it is freely given. When the child truly understands this, any shame, fear, and guilt impairing the relationship and the flow of love is removed.

Forgiveness, as received, is described in the New Testament by two Greek words. The first, as mentioned above, is *aphiemi* (Strong's G863).

Uses: leave 52; forgive 47; suffer 14; let 8; forsake 6; let alone 6; misc 13. Total: 146.

Meanings (major headings):

- to send away [the guilt]
- to permit, allow, not to hinder, to give up a thing to a person
- to leave, go away from one

Here are some examples of the use of the word *aphiemi*:

"And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." (Matt 9:2)

According to this verse, in whom is the change taking place? Is it a change in God or in the sick man? What would be taken away from this man? Remember, the word *aphiemi* is used here, meaning to forgive or send away. In this case, the sin or, really, the results of it - the guilt and shame. The palsied man was cured of his physical ailment but also of the mental effects of his sins, perhaps including depression which would be changed to "good cheer."

Jesus, who always said and did what was consistent with His Father's character, said, as He was being crucified:

"... Father, forgive [*aphiemi*] them; for they know not what they do ..." (Luke 23:34)

He wasn't asking His Father to feel like forgiving them (*charizomai*). Rather, He was asking that the soldiers mistreating Him could understand and accept the forgiveness. It seems that prayer was answered in the case of the centurion and likely his soldiers (Matt 27:54).

"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." (Matt 6:14-15)

If we don't *aphiemi* others, does God forgive us? Yes, He forgives He has given us *charizomai*, but we will not receive *aphiemi*. Why not? Because we cannot feel free of guilt and shame in our hearts if we are not willing to do what we should and need to in order for others to experience that freedom when they have wronged us. If we refuse to set others free, then we cannot experience freedom from the guilt of our own sins. This relates being judged as we judge (Matt 7:2).

The second Greek word, "*apoluo*" (Strong's G630) means much the same, as it is along the lines of "to release," "put away," "send away."

"And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go [*apoluo*];" (Luke 14:4)

This verse shows the closeness in meaning of *aphiemi* and *apoluo*:

"Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed [*apoluo*] him, and forgave [*aphiemi*] him the debt." (Matt 18:27)

These Greek words refer to the work God accomplishes in the heart or mind of the believer who accepts what Jesus has done for them.

Summary

We need to understand that forgiveness is a transaction between two parties. There is the forgiver, the one who offers and gives the pardon, and there is the forgivee, the one who receives the pardon. Forgiveness isn't just God forgiving us, but a process by which He forgives us and we accept that forgiveness and, as a result, we feel forgiven, guilt-free and appreciative of God. Clearly, Biblical forgiveness is a two-party transaction.

the forgiver

gives forgiveness
(*charizomai*)

God always
forgives freely



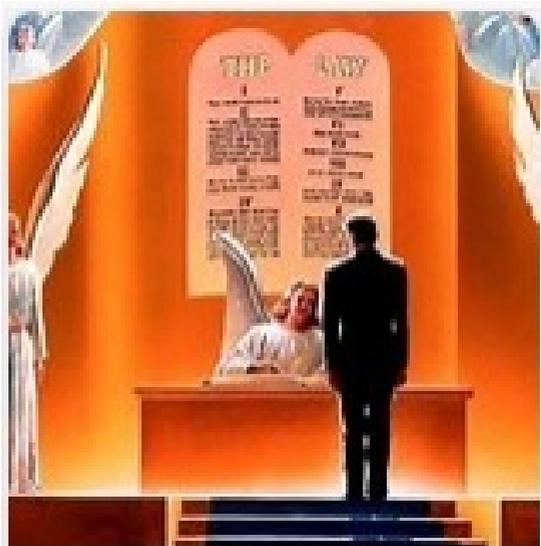
the forgiven

receives forgiveness
(*aphiemi, apoluo*)

we don't always accept or
even know we're forgiven

2. Biblical Forgiveness: A Legal Matter?

Is God forgiving our sins a legal matter? Many people, when they think of forgiveness, imagine a ledger or some accounting system in heaven where every sin is recorded and, when confessed, the record is removed. And if it is not, the sinner will have to meet that record in the judgment and pay the appropriate penalty which, in some minds, is eternal death and, in many others, an eternity in hell.



Freely Forgiven

However, as already noted, God forgives every sin. If a sin is truly forgiven, there is no debt to pay. Let's establish that God freely forgives without precondition.

Simon, a Pharisee, hosted a dinner where a woman, in an act of gratitude, anointed Jesus' feet with expensive perfume. In response to Simon's thoughts Jesus said to him:

"There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged." (Luke 7:41-43)

Simon, to whom Jesus told this story, could not have missed the application to himself as one of the debtors - the less appreciative one - and yet the message was that he was also forgiven even while having negative feelings towards this woman (whom he viewed as a sinner) and towards Christ Himself. Yes, God freely forgives:

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give [*charizomai*] us all things?" (Rom 8:32)

Notice that "freely give" is translated from the word *charizomai*. Freely forgiving means without price, without precondition.

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven [*charizomai*] you all trespasses;" (Col 2:13)

God had granted forgiveness (*charizomai*) to the Colossians while they were still dead in their sins. That would have been before any confession on their part.

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving [*charizomai*] one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave [*charizomai*] you, so also do ye." (Col 3:13)

Here Paul is telling the Colossians that they need to forgive one another (they had not done it yet) even as Christ had already forgiven them.

The verses above and Eph 4:31-32 quoted in chapter 1 show that God freely forgives from His heart. He is much more concerned with re-establishing the relationship, with reconciling us to Himself, than He is with punishment. We will see that in fact punishment comes upon us as a consequence of our refusal to reconcile ourselves to God, like a sick patient who refuses treatment from a doctor. In such a scenario, when the patient's sickness gets worse is the doctor punishing him?

But Aren't There Preconditions?

Here is a verse that does sound like a precondition for forgiveness:

"But if ye do not forgive (*aphiemi*), neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive (*aphiemi*) your trespasses." (Mark 11:26)

Notice that the word here for forgiveness is *aphiemi*, not *charizomai*. If the word in each case was *charizomai* it would mean that if we don't, from our heart, grant forgiveness, God will not do the same towards us; He will not feel like forgiving us. That would effectively make His feelings toward us dependent on our actions.

If it was *charizomai*, that would mean that we would only have to feel like forgiving or have a disposition to forgive in our minds. But *aphiemi* indicates for us to make an active effort to reach out to the person who is weighed down with guilt from injuring us and help him to release that burden. It is not enough that we feel we have forgiven, but the one who has offended us must feel we have forgiven him. It would be difficult for a person to feel forgiven if they understood that forgiveness was being withheld from them.

For someone we forgive to feel forgiven they have to know that we do not hold anything against them. This requires that we somehow communicate that, which of course should mean that we actually have forgiven them in our heart. If we will not take that step it is likely that we have not received forgiveness from God ourselves, not because He has not granted it but because we have not accepted it, perhaps believing that He is unforgiving. If we view God as unforgiving, we will tend to have the same attitude towards others. If we don't let others know they are forgiven and relieve their burden of guilt, that means we haven't understood God's forgiveness of us and therefore we won't be able to feel that we are forgiven and have our own burden relieved.

It is key that God relates to us His forgiving, ever-merciful character. This He has done in His Word. However, misunderstanding His law to be imposed rules rather than laws designed for our benefit has led to forgiveness being seen as conditional. Man's imposition of his own ideas of forgiveness and justice onto God and onto the translation of His word has added to the confusion.

Justice and Punishment

Actually, imposing punishment is not even something that God does. People think that God personally punishes sin because of their confused idea of God's mercy and justice. They understand God to be love and to have a loving attitude towards sinners but, because of His attribute of justice, He cannot leave a sin unpunished. This comes from a misunderstanding of God's justice and of His law.

Biblical justice¹ is about doing the right thing which is to restore to a right state, to heal and to save. It is restorative, not retributive. Actually, there are no verses using the word "justice"² (KJV) which support that justice means to punish sin. That understanding of justice very much depends upon which "law lens"³ you are looking through; which understanding of God's law you have. Is God's law natural - meant to protect us and for our benefit - or strictly legal, with arbitrary penalties that He imposes?

Any "penalty" we might think is coming from God is actually not imposed but a natural consequence, something that comes from sin itself:

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom 6:23)

Here is a version stating that more clearly:

"For sin pays its wage--death; but God's free gift is eternal life in union with Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom 6:23, GNT)

The source of death is sin⁴, ultimately originating from Satan, not God:

"Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." (James 1:15)

¹ <https://characterofgod.org/justice-definition/>

² <https://characterofgod.org/justice-verses/>

³ <https://characterofgod.org/law-definition/>

⁴ <https://characterofgod.org/sin-destruction/>

It is the consequences of sins that we refuse to let go of that punishes us, not God arbitrarily determining a punishment for us.

Love and Forgiveness

God is love (1 John 4:8) and love, described in Corinthians, includes:

"[Charity, or love] Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;" (1 Cor 13:5)

Most other versions render the last portion as not keeping a record of wrongs:

"It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs." (1 Cor 13:5, NIV)

"does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered," (1 Cor 13:5, NASB)

While the omniscient God does not forget anything, He does not remember our sins in the sense of, as we might say, "I'll remember that" (said in a certain tone of voice) implying the threat of retribution.

When we say that God forgives freely it is not just that, at some point even before we repent, He changes His mind and decides to forgive and stop being angry at us. He never has those feelings towards us. His true feelings are shown more in verses like this:

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it," (Luke 19:41)

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt 23:37)

God Only Wants to Protect

God only wants to shelter and protect us as we would our own children. At times He cannot do that as, being a gentleman, He does not impose His presence where it is not desired. To do so would be to violate our free will and He will never do that.

That principle is reflected in the situation of the people before the flood:

"Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflowed with a flood: Which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them?" (Job 22:16-17)

He can do nothing for people who so defiantly refuse His presence.

Blotting Out Sin

The idea of covering sins in a legal sense is sometimes referred to as blotting out sins or, more often, blotting out the record of sins. This is linked to a process referred to many centuries ago by the prophet Daniel as the cleansing of the sanctuary:

"And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." (Dan 8:14)

But blotting out sins can also be understood not as blotting out a physical record of sins but as a process of removing from individuals even the tendency to sin. There is much more Biblical support for this second view. Verses such as this are not talking about moving or erasing records:

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." (Psa 103:12)

So it is blotting out sins from people not from record books⁵. See a detailed study of this process of cleansing the sanctuary⁶.

⁵ <https://characterofgod.org/records-of-heaven/>

Not Legal but Relational

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."
(Rom 5:10-11)

Notice in this verse that we are reconciled to God; God does not need to be reconciled to us. The reconciliation is in one direction only. Receiving atonement⁷ (v11) is referred to as reconciliation. This, the only use of the word "atonement" in the New Testament, is translated from the noun form of the Greek verb meaning "to reconcile." The origin of the word "Atonement" in English was to be in a state of oneness or to be "at-one", as in being in agreement with another person. Originally, it had nothing to do with legal payment for sin, but over the centuries the meaning has become corrupted.

If a person's sins are transferred to an innocent substitute (willing or not) and that substitute is then considered guilty of those sins and killed for them, then have the sins really been forgiven? Forgiveness implies the forgiver releasing the forgivee (the sinner) from any consequences that might be imposed. The theology that requires transfer of guilt and payment by death makes God unforgiving and always requiring payment. A more extreme understanding includes the idea of appeasement⁸ - that God required (and perhaps even personally imposed) suffering and death before He would forgive. Such teachings have turned many away from God and prevented them from feeling forgiven.

Appeasement theology is reflected in this verse:

⁶ <https://characterofgod.org/daniel-814-the-cleansing-of-the-sanctuary/>

⁷ <https://characterofgod.org/atonement-definition/>

⁸ <https://characterofgod.org/appease-definition/>

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." (Isa 53:4)

But notice that it does not say that the Savior was smitten of God, but only that it was thought, or esteemed, that He was.

Biblical forgiveness is not a legal matter.

3. Biblical Forgiveness: Its Relation to Sin

What is commonly understood to happen after we sin and before God administers forgiveness? Repentance and confession. Then God's forgiveness will be granted; He will pardon and bless - but not before.

What is the common understanding of God's attitude toward us before we repent and confess, and before He has forgiven us? Perhaps that He is angry or upset with us. And what is the attitude of God toward us (as commonly understood) after we repent? Probably that He is happy with us, favorable toward us, and ready to bless us. Basically, He is ready to pardon, we repent and "fess up," and then He forgives and can bless us. But is that really how it is? Is God's degree of love for us and desire to care for us dependent upon our behavior? Does this correspond to your understanding and definition of forgiveness? Consider this verse:

"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Rom 2:4)

Which comes first according to that verse, the goodness of God or something on our part? The goodness of God. If the goodness of God leads us to repentance, then His goodness must come first. Is it possible that confession and repentance follow from recognizing how good He has been to us, that He has never been angry at us but has always wanted what was best for us?

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

God gave His Son before we came along and needed forgiveness. And even after sin had infected all of humanity, God took action to save us:

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom 5:8)

These verses indicate that God loved the world before He gave His Son to die for our sins, which suggests no precondition.

Forgiveness and Debt

Let's look at further quotes on forgiveness to see how it works. Colossians 2 has much to say about forgiveness:

"When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven (*charizomai*) us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." (Col 2:13, 14, NASB)

What is this "certificate of debt" that He canceled and nailed to His cross? From where was it taken? From whom and out of whose way did He take it?

In the King James Version, Colossians 2:14 speaks of Christ "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us." The Greek word there for "handwriting" is *cheirographon*, which was a handwritten document that functioned as a promissory note. This was not referring to the law itself, but to a record of charges that stood against an individual, a record of their indebtedness. Therefore, canceling the debt is referring to God's act of taking our debt of sin and blotting it out.

From Where Was the Debt Taken?

Specifically, from where was the debt taken? The prophet Jeremiah gives us a clue:

"The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; with the point of a diamond it is engraved on the tablet of their heart." (Jer 17:1, NKJV)

To what is the Bible referring by saying we have a record of sin in our heart? Simply that we have a conscience, which plagues us with feelings of guilt and condemnation when we understand our actions and behaviors to be inconsistent with what is right. Forgiveness, as we experience it, involves the canceling out of the record of our indebtedness and removing it from our consciences, thus setting us free from our inner guilt! God accomplished this miraculous change in us through our faith in the death of His Son. This was God's motive in giving Jesus to the world. Christ's death was not intended to appease any innate malice in God's heart or to get Him to forgive, but to liberate us from sin's psychological consequences and enable us to experience forgiveness. The following passage discusses this:

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb 9:14, NKJV)

The blood of Christ cleanses our consciences from the guilt of our "dead works," (works that lead to death) so those sins no longer afflict our consciences. Notice that it is our consciences that are cleansed, not record books in heaven. The guilt and shame is gone. What wonderful relief! It changes us, not Him!

How does the blood of Christ cleanse your conscience? Blood is normally thought of as cleansing the record of sin. Some envision it like this:



But it is hard to see spilled blood as cleansing anything. Scripture says that the blood is a metaphor for the life:

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood *that* maketh an atonement for the soul." (Lev 17:11)

We might think of blood making atonement as in the image above, but that does not fit the original meaning of atonement. However, the life (symbolized by the blood) of Christ could achieve at-one-ment (a state of oneness with Him) because seeing the love He expressed in His life shows us that He is on our side, that He is worthy of our trust, thus reconciling us to Him. The fact that mankind would crucify the loving light source of our world also paints a vivid picture, by contrast, of the truth of our carnal nature. It opens to our minds a deeper understanding and conviction of our sinfulness, which is necessary for full repentance and therefore full forgiveness and healing.

Out of Whose Way Did He Take the Debt?

By doing this grand work in us, Jesus took our indebtedness "out of the way." Out of whose way? Consider these questions: Have you ever owed someone something you couldn't repay? Did it get in the way of your relationship with them? When you saw them, did you intentionally turn the other way or at least avoid the topic of the debt?

Without the cross, our indebtedness would have prevented us from ever drawing close to the Father. Not because the Father would have held our debt over us or turned the other way, but because our enormous guilt would have loomed before us whenever we encountered Him. Our debt would still be in our way. We could never come near to Him because of the guilt of our indebtedness to Him.

Jesus died to save us. He was crucified for us. It was for our redemption, and so that our debt could be taken away from us, that He took our certificate of debt and figuratively nailed it to His cross. This satisfied the concept of debt

that that we have in our minds that stopped us from believing we could be reconciled to God. We need never fear that we owe God and therefore can't come close to Him. Rather, we should turn to Him immediately whenever we do fall into sin. Claim a suitable promise such as:

"Fear thou not; for I *am* with thee: be not dismayed; for I *am* thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." (Isa 41:10)

Cleansing Goes with Forgiveness

The apostle John also talks about forgiveness in this well-known verse:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

John is not talking here about the forgiveness that takes place within God's heart. We are not to think that God's heart is closed to sinners until they confess. Many believe and teach this falsehood about God. He does not hold us at arm's length until we take the first step toward reconciliation. God freely forgave us from the tenderness of His heart long before we had even the first thought of confessing anything. This verse is referring to the work of removing our feelings of indebtedness and then going further to remove sin and unrighteousness; it happens in us, not in Him. Thus, the word used here is *aphiemi*.

Take note of what the verse itself is saying: "to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This forgiveness centers, once again, on the cleansing work that God is doing in us. It's a matter of seeing our need to have the guilt and shame removed and choosing to allow God to do this for us. Both the forgiveness and the cleansing happen in our minds, and God will not interfere with what happens there. He will do this work only if we allow Him.

Remission of Sins

There is another word used in connection with this topic which is closely related to forgiveness. The word "remission" is translated from the Greek noun *aphesis* (Strong's G859) and is derived from the verb *aphiemi*. Note that, in the following verse, remission is very clearly received, not granted:

"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:43)

It is the belief on the part of the forgivee in God's forgiveness that causes him to be delivered of his sins. It is not his belief that causes God to forgive him. God has already forgiven; it is up to us to believe that is so and receive psychological freedom from the guilt of sin.

The same word is used in this verse:

"John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission [*aphesis*] of sins." (Mark 1:4, NKJV)

Baptism is about much more than water cleansing the surface of the skin. Baptism is meant to help us identify with Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. That is why Biblical baptism is by total immersion. As though having died (death), you are buried under the water (burial) and are raised (resurrection) out of the water. It is a beautiful symbol of death to self and a new life in Christ.

"And baptism, of which this [Noah's flood] is an image, now gives you salvation, not by washing clean the flesh, but by making you free from the sense of sin before God, through the coming again of Jesus Christ from the dead." (1 Pet 3:21, BBE)

The relief that comes to the sinner is a realization that God does not hold our sins against us; that He truly forgives. We come to understand that Jesus' death was not a form of appeasement; not to pay a legal penalty that God

required, but rather to demonstrate God's love for us. The King James Version renders this (1 Pet 3:21) as "a good conscience toward God."

Is Remission Conditional?

Still, there seems to be a condition attached to the remission of sin, as suggested by these verses:

"For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matt 26:28)

"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." (Heb 9:22)

It sounds like sacrifice, blood and death is required. However, even this has been greatly misunderstood. Consider these verses:

"Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required." (Psa 40:6)

"For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices:" (Jer 7:22)

"And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:" (Heb 10:11)

There are many other verses showing that God did not require sacrifices to forgive us. But He gave them because we needed them to understand that we were forgiven. Humanity needed a visible token to help him reach out in faith. There are many examples in scripture of God accommodating the needs of man⁹.

This is because our natures are so depraved through the fear of God that comes by sin that we humans felt sacrifices were needed before we could be

⁹ <https://characterofgod.org/love-allows-for-growth/>

forgiven. The predominance of various forms of sacrifice in ancient pagan cultures (looking for assurance of forgiveness) testifies to that. God telling us we were forgiven was not enough; we needed some visible representation to make it real.

God never had a need to see blood and death before He could feel like forgiving sin.

4. Biblical Forgiveness: Some Examples

Let's look at some stories and illustrations to help better understand Biblical forgiveness and how God has attempted to teach it.

Abram

A good example of man feeling the need to sacrifice was Abram. God told Abram (renamed Abraham in Genesis 17) that his seed would be like the stars, and Abram "... believed in the LORD ..." (Gen 15:6) No sign (as evidence) was requested or given. But when God offered him the land, Abram responded differently, expressing doubt by asking for a sign:

"And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. And he [Abram] said Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" (Gen 15:7-8)

Abram, lacking faith in the promise and not being able to simply take God at His word, asked for a visual sign to help him believe. In response, God told him to sacrifice the animals and divide them in half according to cultural practices of the day:

"And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away. And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him." (Gen 15:9-12)

Who required this ritual, God or Abram? We see that God promised Abram without any conditions, without any need of a ritual, but Abram couldn't believe it. He needed something to help him believe, and God accommodated him. We know that this was not the way God would have it

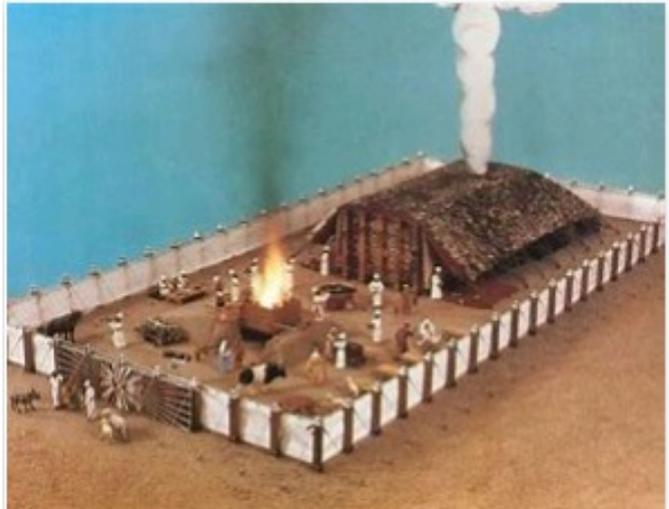
from His statements about not requiring sacrifices and by the fruit of the ritual: "an horror of great darkness fell upon him." That horror and darkness did not come from God. The issue here is God's promise of the land but the same principles apply regarding forgiveness - man needed assurances that God would forgive and God graciously gave them.

The Sacrificial System

God, in His incredible wisdom, was able to accommodate Abram's and later Israel's needs while also teaching great principles of truth. The sacrificial system of the sanctuary, given through Moses, was given to assure man that he could be forgiven even though:

"... it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." (Heb 10:4)

We have seen, in verses earlier, that sacrifices were not desired by God. It was man who thought death was demanded in response to sin. Therefore, in mercy, God created a sacrificial system to accommodate man's misunderstanding so man could believe he was forgiven. The sanctuary service was the system that God gave Moses to allow the nation of Israel a means to deal with sin and feel they were in close contact with God (God was and is actually near us, but unbelief causes us to perceive that He is far off)



The sanctuary service was a visual means of teaching spiritual truths and bringing forgiveness to the sinner and to the nation. Unfortunately, like many other instances of God's interactions with us, it soon was misunderstood and became an empty ritual. While not going into the details of the sanctuary services, the point here is that they were designed to teach a greater reality.

Let's look at some other examples where God had a hard time assuring man of His forgiveness even from the earliest need for it - a hard time not because of His limitations but because of man's.

Adam

When God came to meet with Adam and Eve in the garden, they hid and Adam responded to God's call by saying:

"... I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." (Gen 3:10)

Was Adam's concern over nakedness due to a lack of clothing or was it over having his sin exposed? Physical nakedness didn't appear to be the problem:

"And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." (Gen 2:25)

It seems that the exposure Adam was concerned about was not physical. Notice God's response:

"... Who told thee that thou wast naked? ..." (Gen 3:11)

Essentially, God was saying "I didn't tell you that you were naked; I am not pointing out or condemning your sin; I am not wanting to cause you shame and embarrassment."

But Adam never asked for forgiveness. God was willing to forgive, but Adam was unwilling to receive it and wouldn't believe God anyways, because Adam had absorbed the lie of Satan and then he hid himself from His Heavenly Father in fear. This is what the rest of mankind has inherited – a fear of God and a belief that God needs to be appeased.

Cain

Many feel like Cain who said:

"...Mine iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven." (Gen 4:13; KJV marginal reading)

Here are versions that render it similarly:

"And Cain said to the Lord God, My crime is too great for me to be forgiven." (Gen 4:13, Brenton Septuagint Translation)

"And Cain said to the LORD, My transgression is too great to be forgiven." (Gen 4:13, Lamsa)

So, in that case, it was not that God could not forgive but that Cain could not receive it, perhaps because he could not believe that God was that merciful. While a guilty conscience is meant to drive us to God to receive assurance of forgiveness and a restored relationship, many people allow it to drive them to discouragement and despair - largely because of their misunderstanding of God's loving, ever-merciful character - they don't believe that God freely forgives.

Jacob

Jacob had wrestled with feelings of guilt all his life for his sins, especially that of deceiving his father and other cases of deception. (The name "Jacob" means "supplanter," which is what Jacob did through his deceptions.) The turning point in his life came during the night before he met his brother Esau:

"... Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." (Gen 32:24-26)

It is described as physical wrestling but, more than that, Jacob was desperate for the blessing of assurance of forgiveness. When he finally received that, he was also given added assurance in the form of a name change:

"And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." (Gen 32:28)

He certainly did not prevail in the physical wrestling (v25), but he did prevail in his own mind in being able to receive the much-sought-for forgiveness and relief of his burden.

In the time of trouble Jesus described before the second coming, there is a particular time/circumstance which will parallel Jacob's experience as people seek assurance of forgiveness in preparation for the Lord's coming. It is even referred to as "the time of Jacob's trouble:"

"Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." (Jer 30:7)

It seems that coming experience (and even life today) would be a lot easier if we could have the assurance that God is merciful, that He does not condemn, that we are forgiven. Understanding how forgiveness of our sins works makes that much easier.

The Woman Caught in Adultery

Let's look at the story in John chapter 8 of the woman taken in adultery. Jesus, after saying to her accusers, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," (verse 8) wrote with His finger on the ground. It is thought by many that what He wrote was something that brought to mind their own sins resulting in their self-condemnation. Fearing to be condemned themselves, the accusers crept away one by one. When they were gone, Jesus asked her:

"... Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto

her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." (John 8:10, 11)

Jesus, the revelation of the character of God to humanity, showed us, through His encounter with an adulteress and her accusers, that God's attitude toward sinners is one of simple and complete love and forgiveness. We may not feel that He is relating to us that way, but faith is not feeling. Our job is to believe that God loves us and has forgiven us in spite of our sins, no matter how dark they may be. This must be our belief about God, whether we feel it is true or not. Believing in God's changeless love in direct opposition to our feelings is a battle against self. This is the fight of faith. Think about this woman: Had she confessed her sins yet? No. Did she know Jesus was the Saviour? No. Yet Jesus forgave her without condemnation.

In the examples we have looked at, God's difficulty was never to feel like forgiving. The challenge was always to convince man that he was forgiven.

5. Biblical Forgiveness: Shows God's Heart

Realizing that forgiveness is a two-party transaction, let's look more closely at what takes place in God's heart—on the level of His emotions—and at how God feels toward us as sinners. Consider again:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

We see that the gift of God's Son to die for us was preceded by a love that already existed in God's heart toward sinners. This forgiveness did not originate at the cross; it was already there before Jesus' sacrifice. Had it not been for God's pre-existing love for us, the events of the cross would never have taken place. It was because of God's love for the world that He gave us His only Son. This is a vital point because many believe that God would have continually retained malice toward man in His heart if it had not been for the cross. Many teach that it was through the cross that God was appeased of His enmity or hard feelings toward man. However, the cross did not bring about a change in God's emotional response toward us; rather, it displayed God's heartfelt sentiments for man, which He had long before the events of the cross took place. The cross was necessary for us to come to a deeper repentance and believe we were forgiven.

Don't Condemn Yourself When God Doesn't

Notice another passage that speaks of God's intrinsic forgiveness:

"We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;" (1 John 3:19-21, NASB)

The original word for "confidence" is more often translated as "boldness." We can only have that if our heart (conscience) does not condemn us. If our conscience is clear we can actually have boldness in our relation to God:

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb 4:16)

It seems that a strong connection to God is dependent upon us having a clear conscience.

We have all experienced that nagging feeling deep inside after we've done something we know to be wrong, have we not? God's spirit convicts us of sin (John 16:8), but only to offer us grace and heal us (Rom 5:20) – we should not think the conviction of sin is God condemning us. The apostle John reminds us that when we are conscience-stricken and wrestling under a weight of guilt, we are not to think the condemnation comes from God. God is greater than the heart. Although our hearts, our consciences, may condemn us, His spirit of forgiveness and love is already working to win us back from sin's consequences. Here is a paraphrase of 1 John 3:19-21:

"Such a transformed life is evidence that God's character of love is truly rewritten within us, and with this knowledge we can have peace in his presence, even when we feel inadequate and sinful. The truth is more reliable than our feelings, and God's ability to heal and restore is greater than our sickness, so be courageous, for there is nothing God doesn't already know. Therefore, my friends, if our hearts and minds have been healed and no longer condemn us, we are no longer afraid of God" (1 John 3:19-21, RNT)

"We can have peace in his presence, even when we feel ... sinful!"

But that peace can be in our hearts only if we understand His attitude towards us and, of course, have the desire to overcome that sin. He allows for our mistakes in that He has made provision for them. Long ago, I learned a little trick that has helped me through life. Maybe you've learned this as well. The trick is to not beat yourself up emotionally when you do something

wrong, make a bad decision, or really mess up big time. We are human; we will make mistakes. You may have to suffer some consequences because of mistakes, but admit your mistake, admit that you are not perfect, make it right in whatever way is needed and get on with your life. I believe God wants us to do that; He doesn't want us carrying burdens around. He has forgiven us, and He wants us to forgive ourselves and others.

Do we want our children to be despondent their whole lives with the mistakes they made when they were young and naïve, or dejected when they feel their success is not to the standard they have set for themselves? Did Jesus want Peter to always be in despair for the denial of his Master? No! In the same way, God wants us to know that not only does He love us like we ideally love our children, but also He is able to give us strength in the very areas we are weak. For so God said to Paul:

"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor 12:9)

Charizomai to Aphiemi

Consider the logic of the following verse:

"So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." (2 Cor 2:7)

If you forgive someone, that forgiveness is taking place in your heart, right? Whether or not it affects the heart of the one being forgiven, it must happen in your heart for you to forgive them. Can you comfort someone who you are still steaming mad at? No, you have to have *charizomai* first. You have to have forgiveness in your heart. Then you are able to supply any needed comfort to the person so that he is not "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." This lifting of guilt off the forgivee is *aphiemi* - receiving forgiveness; again, two stages.

A Test of Understanding

Here is a little test to see if you can distinguish between the two parts of this process. Look at this passage:

"To whom ye forgive any thing, I *forgive* also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ." (2 Cor 2:10, italics supplied)

The second occurrence of "forgive" (italicized) was inserted by the translators because it is clearly implied since it says "I also," meaning "I am doing the same thing."

The question is which "forgive" is meant in "To whom ye forgive any thing ..."? Is it *charizomai* (forgiveness granted) or *aphiemi* (forgiveness received)? Is it forgiveness happening in the heart of the forgiver or the forgivee?

If you chose *charizomai*, forgiveness on the part of the forgiver, you made the right choice. You likely answered that way because it says "ye forgive" - Paul is telling his hearers to forgive. But there is another reason.

If you (the forgiver) forgive someone (the forgivee) who has wronged you and that forgiveness is *aphiemi*, then what has happened in the forgivee? The guilt and shame are removed; it is really speaking about the effect on the forgivee. Then can Paul, who is speaking in this verse (saying "I forgive also"), or anyone else come along and remove that same guilt and shame? No, it is already gone. You can't remove something (the guilt and shame) that is already gone. But Paul can have forgiveness (*charizomai*) in his heart (no hard feelings towards the sinner) along with the person he is writing to.

God has forgiveness in His heart and He wants us to know it. Jesus said:

"Let not your heart be troubled ... my peace I give unto you ..."
(John 14:1,27)

And He said it immediately after Peter rashly declared he would never deny Christ.

6. Biblical Forgiveness: Praying for It

By now, I hope you can understand what a prayer for forgiveness of sins is actually a prayer for. The first part of prayer is recognition and confession of sin. Repenting and confessing your sins includes realizing that you are involved in sin, turning from it and forsaking it.

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." (Pro 28:13)

When you are no longer involved in sin, there is no reason for guilt and shame; the sin that causes it is gone. Guilt and shame are natural consequences of wrong actions. Stop any actions that cause guilt and shame, and the guilt and shame will stop. That sounds simple enough but, for some, it can present challenges. However we have Bible promises of His help:

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." (Isa 41:10)

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Cor 10:13)

God is love (1 John 4:8) and He does not change (Mal 3:6). Therefore, everything He does is consistent with His nature including always forgiving (*charizomai*). He always does what is loving, but what is loving may change as circumstances change. If we will not allow Him to take away the guilt and shame, then forgiveness (*aphiemi*)—that release from feelings of guilt and shame—doesn't happen in us. But, in His heart, He still loves and forgives us and will ultimately do the most loving thing He can for those who persistently do not accept forgiveness. Being a respecter of free will, He will release such persons to the consequences they have chosen which He hopes will cause them to realize the disastrous effects of sin and repent. Ultimately though, continual refusal to forsake sin will have the ever-lasting consequence of separation from God, the Source of life.

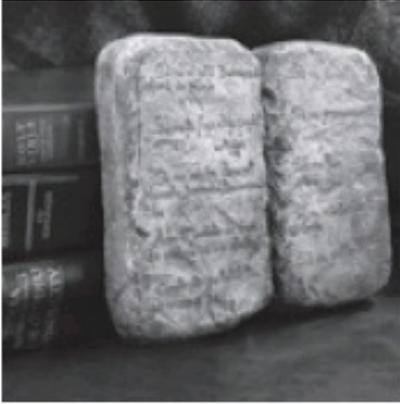
Two-party Transaction Expanded

I mentioned at the start that forgiveness is a two-party transaction with a forgiver and a forgivee. I would like to clarify that a little. While there are two sides involved, the two processes are a little more independent of each other than one might see at first glance.

What do you expect to happen in answer to a prayer for forgiveness of sins? We need to realize that God, in His heart, has already forgiven us whether we accept it or not, whether we know it or not, even whether we want it or not. His forgiveness, His *charizomai* does not depend upon our being good enough, and it does not depend on our repentance or confession or even upon us feeling like we are lousy sinners. He continues to love us, to freely forgive us and even to bless us which, at some level, He does at all times (Matt 5:45). He desperately wants you to turn to Him today and to be saved eternally. He wants to increase your understanding so you will realize the depth of His acceptance and love for you.

Now that you understand forgiveness, pray intelligently when you ask for forgiveness. Don't pray for God to "*charizomai*" you because He already has. People pray "Please, please, God; please forgive me." They beg and plead and promise: "Dear God, if You'll just forgive me, I won't do it again." And they think of and look for a change in God. "God, please will You [stop being mad at me and] forgive me?" You don't need to do that—He already has forgiven you. Don't plead for *charizomai* to happen; it happened long ago.

The more-correct prayer for forgiveness might include (there is no set formula): admitting you have sinned, praising Him for His love and forgiveness and thanking Him for taking away the guilt and shame - that is you experiencing *aphiemi*. For all that to happen, you need to be familiar with His law, appreciate His love and forgiveness, and you need to stop doing the sin. The guilt and shame is a consequence of your wrong actions. So quit the actions! The focus of your prayer really needs to be recognition of how good and merciful and forgiving God is and always has been, and how you need to change, not Him.



While the law, designed to protect us, was written in stone to show its permanence, Jesus wrote the sins of the accusers of the adulteress (John chapter 8) in the dust of the ground showing how ready God was to erase them.

God will replace the sin in our hearts by writing His law there if we will allow Him to do so.

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;" (Heb 10:16)

The difficulty in this process lies with us. There may be sins in our life that we are doing or holding onto, not realizing they are sins. Even though we don't know they are sins, maybe don't even know they are there or don't accept that they are sinful, they still damage us. God is willing to show us those sins, but that can be painful for us. When our life experiences lead us to see our sin, let us not turn away in fear. People often think ignorance is bliss, but with sin that isn't the case. When we discover a sin in ourselves, let us rejoice that the Spirit of God has led us to see it with the goal of us repenting of it and receiving forgiveness and newness of life.

"And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." (John 16:8)

"Moreover the law entered [our understanding], that [awareness of] the offence [our sins] might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (Rom 5:20)

The more time we spend with Jesus, the more sinful we will see ourselves to be. Many people dislike this process and therefore they stop reading the Bible or don't want to be around others of strong faith. But this comes from a wrong understanding of God. God will not force us to change; He first needs us to want to change. When we see our sinfulness, we can ask God to make us more like Jesus whom we are getting to know better and better. Let us believe that we are being sanctified and becoming more like Jesus, even if Satan or the world or anybody else says nothing is happening.

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure. Whosoever commits sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him." (1 John 3:1-6)

The key to being cured of sin and therefore being made right in regard to the law and filled with the life of God, is to know the Son of God, and purify ourselves to be like Him.

Pray for understanding of God's forgiveness and a willingness to gratefully accept it without reservation.

Summary

God always forgives you from His heart. His forgiveness is freely available and offered even before you ask. He does not hold a grudge towards you while waiting for you to do something first. We don't need to perform acts of merit before God will consider loving us. It is not a matter of record keeping or you somehow balancing the books, but of actual healing of hearts so our relationship to God is restored and our tendency to sin is removed.

You are His precious child and He never harbors any negative thoughts towards you nor ever condemns you. This is a wonderful truth that will increase your love for Him. Realizing His freely-offered (*charizomai*) forgiveness and true feelings towards you makes it much easier to accept (*aphiemi*) the freely-offered forgiveness and the healing and salvation that goes with it.

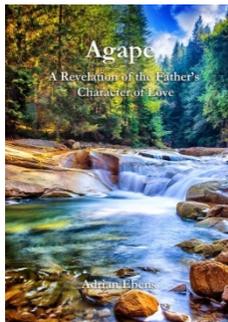
And it makes sense when compared to our experience. Think especially of the loving parents of young children. They always forgive their children when they do something wrong; they don't love them any less, and they don't hold grudges against them. Our children help teach us of the relationship between God and us and how He regards all of His children.

So accept the forgiveness that is freely offered to you. Learn to see God as the wonderful parent He is. Isn't it a blessing to understand God's forgiveness? Rejoice in His free forgiveness and the removal of your feelings of guilt!

Finally, if you know anyone struggling with forgiveness, please share this little booklet with them.

Suggested books available at fatheroflove.info also available in audiobook for download

Agape



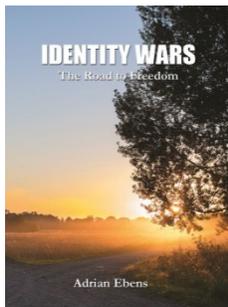
Take a deeper a look at the Bible evidence that the God of the Old Testament is the same as what Jesus revealed in the New Testament. The book is a detailed and systematic examination of the facts that provide a direct way to look at several of the stories of the Bible that have not been previously considered. Just on 300 pages, this is a serious read for those really looking for answers. A Great sequel to this booklet you have in your hands.

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Marriage as an institution is under serious threat. Why do so many people have a bad experience with marriage and relationships in general? Original Love looks at the original relationship described in the Bible to see what things we might learn that our own relationships might be enhanced and enriched. 44 Pages packed with vital principles for a vibrant marriage.

Identity Wars



Identity Wars is a journey of self-discovery. It is an invitation to learn of your value in a purely relational context. This book reveals the principles that will help you escape the performance-driven mindset of this world and find freedom in your most important relationships.

Forgiveness Fast Facts

- Forgiveness is given by a forgiver - the person doing the forgiving.
- Forgiveness is received by a forgivee - the person being forgiven.
- Forgiveness therefore has two parts and it is a two-party process.

- The Greek has different words for forgiveness granted and received.
- Forgiveness granted is translated from the Greek word *charizomai*.
- Forgiveness received is translated from the Greek word *aphiemi*.

- God never actively, personally imposes punishment for sins.
- All sin has consequences that are a natural result of the sin.
- Sins are sinful (wrong to do) because they hurt us and others.

- God's relationship with us is much like parents with their children.
- God designed every one of His laws for our blessing and protection.
- None of God's laws are arbitrary: "because I'm God and I said so."

- Our ever-merciful God always forgives every sin we commit.
- God does not love us any less when we fall into even serious sin.
- God only wants to protect us from the harmful effects of sin.

Evidence for all of the above facts is given in this study. Understanding how forgiveness works, that we are always forgiven by God, helps to lift any burden of guilt and shame from us. Accept God's freely-offered forgiveness and you will experience great peace of mind and a clear conscience. May this booklet greatly encourage you to draw close to Him.