

FORGIVENESS  
***Eight Things to Know about Forgiveness***

May 9, 2021 am

HDBC

**I love a good story of forgiveness and redemption.** One of my favorites comes from WWII. It is the story of Jacob DeShazer and Mitsuo Fuchida. Even without knowing each other there was a mutual disdain. Fuchida was the combat general officer who gave the final order to bomb Pearl Harbor. Years later he wrote these words:

*Like a hurricane out of nowhere, my torpedo planes, dive bombers and fighters struck suddenly with indescribable fury. As smoke began to billow and the proud battleships, one by one, started tilting, my heart was almost ablaze with joy. It was the most thrilling exploit of my career.*

**DeShazer** was on KP duty on a base in Oregon when he learned of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Four months later he was part of a crew on one of the bombers led by Jimmy Doolittle who bombed Tokyo. His plane ran out of fuel and they crash landed. He was captured by the Japanese and held in a POW camp for forty agonizing months. He watched as some of his friends were executed quickly and others starved to death. He hated the Japanese.

**At one point** he asked for & was given a Bible but told he could only have it for 3 weeks. He began to read it and it gripped his heart. When he got to Romans 10:9 he read the words, *If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you shall be saved.* At that moment he confessed his sin and received the grace of God for salvation.

**Not only** did he experience the freedom of being forgiven, but he found that his bitter hatred of the Japanese was changing. Two months later his camp was liberated. He was nearly dead physically but was a new man spiritually. He returned to the states and attended a Bible college. He was so full of love for others, he decided to become a missionary to Japan. He wrote his story and had it distributed in Japan.

**Mitsuo Fuchida** read it. He was gripped by the story and wrote:

*His story was something I could not explain. Neither could I forget it. The peaceful motivation I had read about was exactly what I was seeking. Since the American had found it in the Bible, I decided to purchase one myself, despite my traditional Buddhist heritage. In the ensuing weeks, I read this book eagerly. I came to the climactic drama—the Crucifixion. I read in Luke 23:34 the prayer of Jesus Christ at His death; Father forgive them; for they know not what they do. I was impressed that I was certainly one of those for whom He had prayed.*

*Right at that moment, I seemed to meet Jesus for the first time. I understood the meaning of His death as a substitute for my wickedness, and so in prayer, I requested Him to forgive my sins and change me from a bitter, disillusioned ex-pilot into a well-balanced Christian with a purpose for living.*

*That date, April 14, 1950 I became a new person. My complete view on life was changed by the intervention of the Christ I had always hated and ignored before.*

**Through** the forgiveness of Christ the Japanese officer who gave the order to bomb Pearl Harbor and the tortured American POW were filled with forgiveness and love for one another. Both found freedom from bitterness and purpose in life because of **forgiveness**.

**Today** I want to offer what I hope will be some helpful statements about forgiveness. Some will help us dig a little deeper into subject I've already touched on. Others will address questions that might not have been answered.

## **1. Forgiveness is better than revenge. (Romans 12:17-21)**

*Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. (17). Note the absolutes in that simple statement. **Never**, at no time ever. There is never a time when revenge is appropriate. It is always to be rejected. **Anyone**. There is no one who is worthy of your revenge. No one is so evil, so wicked, so bad that you are justified in taking your own revenge. **He repeats it in verse 19. Never take your own revenge, beloved.** Revenge means to retaliate in kind or degree. To inflict injury in return. The Bible says NO to this.*

**Getting revenge** seems like a reasonable thing to do. In some cultures it is even considered an honorable thing. We often think will get some sense of satisfaction that will enable us to move forward. This is simply not true. Rather than liberating, it adds guilt and the pain you are already suffering.

## 2. God always sees and always acts

Your decision to not get revenge does not mean your harm will go unavenged. It will be done by one who is better at it than you. **God.**

Romans 12:19. *Leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “vengeance is mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.*

**Vengeance** belongs to God. That means he is committed to it. He will not allow sin to go unpunished. *I will repay.* What an bold statement of truth. There is no doubt found in that statement. He will indeed do it.

**God does not** always work in the way we want Him to work or in the time that we want Him to work. But He is always at work. He does not always show His work to us, but He is always at work. Trust Him!

## 3. Your offender is also broken

This may be difficult to see and even harder to admit. But it is true. The one who has hurt you is also frail and carries the scars that come with sin.

Romans 12:20.

*But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.* We are to treat our offender with kindness and love. This fits with what Jesus said. We are to love those who hate us & pray for those who persecute us. We are to turn the other cheek. Rather than getting revenge we need to actually be proactive in showing love to our offender.

**But** this also reveals in a subtle way that your offender is also a person who has needs. See him as a person who has been made in the image of God, just like you, who has been hurt by this broken world.

## 4. Forgiveness may not lead to reconciliation

*If possible, so far as it depends on your, be at peace with all men.* (18)

**If possible**, means that it is not completely up to you. In order for reconciliation to happen both parties must be willing.

- 1) When the offending party refuses to repent and seek reconciliation
- 2) When protective boundaries are needed, even after forgiveness.

Abuse. Repeated harmful behavior. Negative influence. Hindering your spiritual growth. There are times when you forgive but go separate ways.

## 5. **Forgiveness may not end your pain or suffering**

It would be naïve for you to think that just because you do the right thing and forgive another person that instantly your pain & frustration will go away. You may not only have ongoing problems as a result of the harm done to you, but you may still have **internal struggles**. If you were physically harmed by someone you may carry physical scars or impairments the rest of your life. In a similar way you may have internal scars. However, forgiveness is a necessary step that will lead you toward inner peace.

**We are not promised** to be released from pain in this life. But it is absolutely promised in the next life. This world is not heaven and we should thank God that it is not. Heaven is better, grander, sweeter. That's why believers are able to easily release our hold on this life and embrace the next.

## 6. **Satan is the real villain**

We tend to focus our anger toward the people who hurt us. And they are not absolved from personal responsibility. However, we need to remember that the real villain is Satan. He is the one who brought brokenness into the world. He is the one who continues to fight against God and all that is good. He is the disrupter of peace and tranquility. He is the bad guy.

**Furthermore**, his days are numbered. God has a plan for him that will one day remove him from our presence. One day he will be judged, condemned and forever separated from all that is good. Even Satan is not getting away with his wickedness. He will be judged.

**As you picture** the one who hurt you, realize there is one more evil who is ultimately behind their action. Realize who the true enemy is. Also realize that you can be influenced by him to hurt others.

Two more that may challenge you a bit.

## 7. **God does not need to be forgiven, He needs to be trusted**

Sometimes people express a need to forgive God. I understand the thought process behind it. You look at what has happened to you and you know that God is sovereign and could have prevented it. He did not and that hurts. It is

one thing to be hurt by another human being but another thing entirely to realize God allowed it. Along with the pain there may be a sense of betrayal. How could a loving God have allowed that to happen to me. If God really loved me he would not have allowed it.

To take it a step further, ***if God is good, He would not have allowed it.*** Since He did allow it, He must not be good. That is a human attempt to solve a problem that cannot be solved with human reasoning. It takes faith in a sovereign God.

**Forgiveness implies sin.** If you feel a need to forgive God you are implying that God has sinned. I'm sympathetic to the pain you may feel because God has allowed pain into your life. I don't understand why God has allowed that to happen. But this much I know, God is both **holy** (without sin) and **good** (without malice). Therefore, whatever He has allowed, He has done so for reasons that are above my ability to comprehend, but which I know are good.

**I don't need to forgive God, I need to trust Him.** Clarity will come . . . one day. Maybe in this life, maybe not. But it will come. In the time between now and then, trust Him. **You've trusted Him for your eternal life.** Trust Him with this pain you have experienced.

## **8. God's forgiveness is more powerful than self-forgiveness.**

Sometimes I am asked ***how can I forgive myself.*** Again, I understand what is behind the question. There is an ongoing, nagging sense of guilt over something you have done. You've prayed for God to forgive but you just can't shake the sense of shame and guilt. So, you try to find a way to forgive yourself. Let me share a couple of problems here.

### **1) The Bible never commands us to forgive ourselves.**

We are to be forgiven by God and to forgive others. The Bible is silent on this subject. Let's stick with what the Bible teaches.

### **2) Forgiveness, by definition, involves more than one person.**

When forgiveness is needed or offered there are always two parties; the offended and the offenders.

### **3) We are incapable of forgiving ourselves.**

I am not qualified to forgive myself. I am a sinner and have no basis for

declaring that I am forgiven. Only God can do that. It takes a holy God to declare forgiveness to a sinful person. If you are concerned with forgiving yourself, you are not fully resting in God's forgiveness.

**Forgiveness** is one of the most powerful weapons we have to defeat the enemy. **Forgiveness** is one of the most powerful tools we have to lead people to Christ.

As I wrap up this series on forgiveness, consider these questions:

Have I received the forgiveness of God through repentance and faith?  
Am I offering forgiveness to those who have hurt or offended me?

It was five days before Christmas (1974) when a stranger approached ten-year-old Christopher Carrier, claiming to be a friend of his father. "I want to buy him a gift, and I need your help," said the stranger. Eager to do something good for his dad, Chris climbed aboard a motor home with the man.

**He took Chris** to a remote field, claiming to be lost, and asked Chris to look at a map. Suddenly Chris felt a sharp pain in his back. The stranger had stabbed him in the back. The man drove the wounded boy down a dirt road, shot him in the left temple, and left him for dead in the Florida Everglades.

Chris lay there for six days until a hunter found him. He miraculously survived his injuries, though he was blind in his left eye. Because he was unable to identify his attacker, police could not make an arrest. For a long time young Chris remained frightened, despite police protection. Finally at an invitation given after a church hayride, Chris trusted Jesus Christ as his Savior.

He recalls, *I was overwhelmed with emotions because I knew I had never really accepted and personally met the Savior.* This turning point in Chris's life came three years after the attack. At age 15 Chris shared his story for the first time. He eventually decided to pursue full-time ministry, helping others find the peace he had discovered in Christ. He was often asked what he would do if he had the chance to talk with his attacker. He always said he would jump at the chance.

In 1996 (22 years after the attack) a detective told Chris that a man had confessed to the crime. The man's name was David McAllister. Chris made plans to visit the feeble and now blind man, living in a nursing home. He was now a broken, humbled 77-year-old.

**Chris learned** from the detective some of the background of what had happened years ago. McAllister had been hired by Chris's father to work as a nurse for an ailing uncle. Chris's dad had caught McAllister drinking on the job and had fired him. The senseless attack on Chris had been motivated by revenge.

Chris said, "I told him, 'What you meant for evil, God has turned into a wonderful blessing.'" Chris told his attacker how God had allowed his wounds to become open doors to share the good news of Christ.

Chris went home and told his wife and kids about meeting the man who had tried to kill him. The entire family began regular visits to McAllister's nursing home.

During one Sunday afternoon visit, Chris popped the most important question he had yet asked McAllister: ***Do you want to know the Lord?*** He said yes & gave his heart to Christ. A few days later McAllister died—peacefully—in his sleep.

**Carrier says it is not a story of regret**, but of redemption. "I saw the Lord give that man back his life, and so much more," Chris said. "I can't wait to see him again someday—in heaven."

**I'll never** meet David McAllister in this life. He is already in heaven with Jesus.  
**I'll probably** never meet Chris Carrier in this life.

I'll probably bump into both men in heaven one day. And I'll likely notice the bond they have with one another that was forged in the sweet fellowship of forgiveness.

Make sure you get to heaven by being forgiven by God.

Make sure you go to heaven with no concerns over whom you might bump into, whom you have not forgiven in this life.