

## **Forgiveness**

Before we get started, let us spend a few moments remembering the sacrifice of so many in the Armed Services who died while serving. Armed Services Day celebrates those who are currently on active duty. Veterans day honors those who served and returned. Memorial day honors the sacrifice of those who served and did not return. According to Wikipedia:

“It is a day for visiting cemeteries and memorials to mourn the military personnel who died in the line of duty. Volunteers will place American flags on the graves of those military personnel in national cemeteries. Others such as family and friends will also come to lay flowers and grieve on the graves of those who died in the US military.<sup>1</sup>”

On another topic, many times now I have said that hatred is wrong. Hatred is a sin. Christians should not engage in hatred. It leads to violence. We have seen in the past week two anti-semitic murders in Washington DC. My wish is that this hatred could be quashed. Yet, knowing that the world appears to be preparing for the Tribulation I expect more hatred not less.

From the Christian perspective, we must stay in fellowship via the filling of the Holy Spirit. We must manifest the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Herman calls them the divine nine.

Now, let us go to our lesson for today: forgiveness.

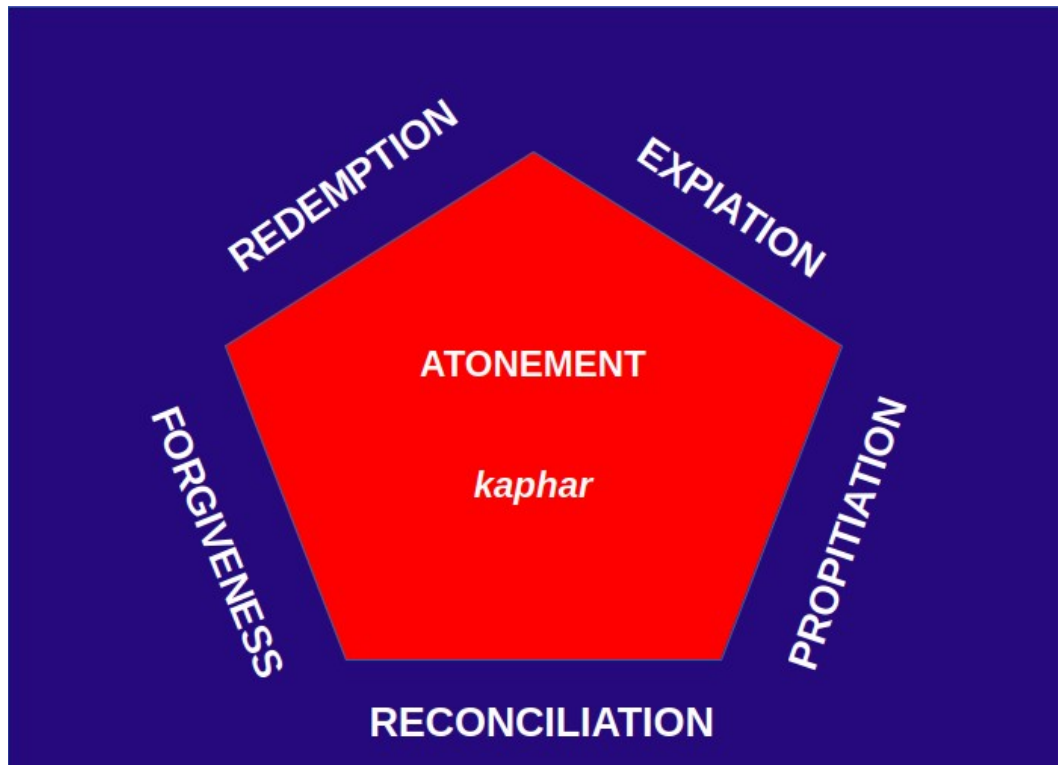
The topic of forgiveness is related to other doctrines we have studied. While focused on those doctrines, the topic of forgiveness was not specifically addressed. Now it is time to look at the topic of forgiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memorial\\_Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memorial_Day)

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Please understand that the fabric of Scripture reaches into the various doctrines. There is a “fabric of doctrine.” Robby Dean made a slide that helps in this respect:



Atonement: This is like an umbrella. All the other doctrines in the illustration relate to atonement. Atonement? The substitutionary spiritual death of Jesus on the cross. Looking at various dictionary definitions suggests that all of the other doctrines are involved.

We know about the “big three:” redemption, propitiation and reconciliation. We don’t often mention expiation. This is the other side of redemption. Expiation means the cancellation of the debt that Jesus paid for. That leaves forgiveness.

Forgiveness. What does that mean? The answer is not so obvious without some background. Sure, I can simply say I forgive you for your errant

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2 <https://deanbible.org/dbmfiles/slides/2015-1Peter-106b.pdf> I drew this illustration, but it is a duplicate of one made by Robby Dean.

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actions. But this begs a description of how we got there. What am I forgiving you of?

First, there needs to be a “transgression” or “sin.” Someone must be injured in some way. Many of the terms associated with Christ’s work on the cross and our resultant salvation are often used in a legal arena. Indeed much of the Bible is written from the perspective of a courtroom.

In a court case, someone brings a suit against someone else. If I go to the court and say I want to sue someone, I have to show that I have been “injured” in some way. That is called “standing.” I cannot bring a case to court if I do not have standing. If my next door neighbor was injured by a faulty product that he bought at a store, I cannot normally sue the store because I was not injured. I do not have standing.

So in forgiveness, I cannot forgive someone who has not injured me. I do not have standing.

In the divine arena, mankind has “injured” God by sin. We are God’s creation. We are accountable to Him. When we violate our relationship with our creator we injure that relationship. One of the worst injuries we can engage in is idolatry. This is characterized as “evil” in the Old Testament. As a result of sin, God must judge it. His character demands it. That part of His character that demands it is called righteousness. God provides a solution to sin in the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Those that accept this solution through faith in Jesus for salvation are “forgiven.” Those that reject the free grace-oriented solution have no place to go except the Lake of Fire. But forgiveness is broader than just for the believer. Like some other concepts in the Bible, forgiveness has different categories.

God’s solution to the sin problem is embodied in the work of Jesus on the cross. His atoning work is often given the term “blood” of Christ. The

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blood is often associated with “forgiveness” in the Bible. As it says, “without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22). This is said specifically of sin against God.

Bible Church pastors usually emphasize that the Blood of Christ is not the physical blood of Jesus. In the Old Testament sacrifices, the blood is associated with the life of the animal. Removing the blood causes the death of the animal. So it is the death, as depicted by the shedding of blood, that is the requirement of the sacrifice. So when we talk of the “blood” of Christ, we are actually talking not about the physical blood of Christ but of the spiritual death of Jesus because of the judgment of sin. Our sins were poured out on Him and judged. That caused His spiritual death. Hence it is called the blood of Christ.

A short detour of interest.

It is interesting to note the sacrifice of Able. At that time, people were apparently vegetarians. After Adam and Eve sinned, God told them they would eat plants.

**Genesis 3:17 Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life.**

**Genesis 3:18 “Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field;**

There is nothing here about eating meat. In fact, in the Garden there was nothing about eating meat. Only eating of the fruit of the trees. Eating

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meat is not specifically mentioned until after the flood. In God's instructions to Noah after the flood...

**Genesis 9:3 Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant.**

Previously, mankind ate plants. Now, “every moving thing that is alive” is food. As Thomas Constable says, “God gave Noah permission to eat animals (v. 3). Until now evidently people had eaten only plants (cf. 1:29).<sup>3</sup>”

Here is a caution. We as Westerners look at the Bible from our perspective. But the Bible was written in languages foreign to us in a culture with which we are unfamiliar. And sometimes we are “illiterate” when it comes to the book of Genesis. There are some profound insights in Genesis which we often miss.

Now back to our topic.

As a result of sin, unbelievers are “enemies” of God and hostile towards Him, even if they are not conscious of that.

Again, the solution requires judgment. God has done that by judging Jesus on the cross. Jesus' blood refers to His spiritual death because of that divine wrath poured out on Jesus.

Now let us dig deeper into the meaning of forgiveness primarily from the perspective of the New Testament. What we will find is that there are four categories of forgiveness<sup>4</sup>:

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3 <https://soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/genesis.pdf>, p164

4 This is based upon work by Robby Dean <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/hebrews-menuitem/message/2005-hebrews-155b/read> What follows is based on Robby Dean's lessons.

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1. “Forgiveness as a result of Jesus’ work on the cross. This extends to all, even unbelievers. This does not save, but removes sin as an issue in salvation. We know from previous study that life and righteousness are the issues. But these are not acquired except through faith in Jesus.
2. Forgiveness as a result of Jesus’ work on the cross given to the believer at the point of faith.
3. Forgiveness as a result of Jesus’ work on the cross given to believers who acknowledge or confess sin.
4. Forgiveness of one believer for another person.”

The first point may cause you to stop and question how unbelievers could be “forgiven.” Robby Dean calls this “forensic” or legal forgiveness. It is easier to understand if you consider that atonement is unlimited because Jesus died for ALL sin. As a result, sin is not the issue because “forensically” (in other words, in a legal arena) forgiveness has been extended to all mankind. Note however, that there is a personal forgiveness to the individual who believes in Jesus. So just as sin is not the issue in salvation because all sin has been paid for, so the cancellation of the debt, the forgiveness has been extended legally over the human race. But not individually.

Here is Robby Dean’s explanation: “First of all we have a judicial forgiveness. This is the forgiveness directed toward God at the cross. It is that cancellation of the debt. Who did we owe the debt to? The debt is the legal penalty that has to be paid. We talk about this even in English idiom. Somebody goes to prison. Why do they go to prison? They go to prison because they have a debt to society that they have to pay. They have broken the law and so they have to pay the price for breaking the law. It is a payment of a judicial penalty towards the judicial system. So

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there is a judicial forgiveness. It's directed towards God who's the Supreme Judge of the universe. It means that God cancels the debt of sin. This is for all mankind without distinction.<sup>5</sup>

Here is another example of “forensic.” Justification of the believer occurs at the point of salvation. God imputes to us His righteousness and then declares us “righteous.” This is a legal act. This is forensic. It does not cause us to do righteous deeds. That only happens when we are faith dependent on the Holy Spirit.

Let us start with the Greek words for forgiveness. There is a noun and a verb from the same root. Quoting from Robby Dean<sup>6</sup>:

“Αφεσις noun; release, liberation, pardon, cancellation, forgiveness ”

“The act of freeing or liberating or releasing someone from captivity; The act of freeing from an obligation, guilt or punishment; Pardon, cancellation. (BDAG)<sup>7</sup>”

αφιημι v. (aphieœmi), “let go, cancel, remit, leave, forgive” Emphasizes the act of forgiveness

χαριζομαι (charizomai), show favour or kindness, give as a favour, to be gracious to someone, to pardon Emphasizes the attitude underlying forgiveness

**Colossians 2:13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive (aorist indicative) together with Him, having forgiven (aorist participle) us all our transgressions,**

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5 <https://deanbible.org/dbmfiles/slides/2005-Hebrews-155b.pdf>

6 <https://deanbible.org/dbmfiles/slides/2018-Ephesians-204b.pdf>

7 <https://deanbible.org/dbmfiles/slides/2005-Hebrews-155b.pdf>

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**Colossians 2:14** having canceled (aorist participle) out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken (perfect indicative) it out of the way, having nailed (aorist participle) it to the cross.

The action of the aorist participle takes place prior to the action of the main verb. Here the main verb is “he made you alive.” He made us alive because He had already forgiven us and already nailed it to the cross.

The second category of forgiveness is applied to believers at the point of salvation.

**Colossians 1:14** in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (this equates redemption and forgiveness)

**Ephesians 1:7** In Him we have redemption (payment of a price) through His blood (the spiritual death of Jesus on the cross), the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace (similar to Colossians 1:14, redemption and forgiveness are equated.)

The phrase, “the forgiveness of our trespasses (sins) explains or describes redemption. The phrase is like a parenthesis that describes the redemption.

The third category of forgiveness deals with sin forgiven when the believer confesses it. I came out of a Roman Catholic background. I



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don't like the word confess. But that is what the word in 1 John 1:9 means. I like to use the word acknowledge.

**1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.**

Per Wuest on "sin."

“”Sin here is singular in number and is used without the definite article, all pointing to the fact that the nature is referred to, not acts of sin. Here we have the denial of the indwelling, totally depraved nature passed down the race from Adam.<sup>8</sup>”

**1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

Some time in the future, I would like to study the verb “to confess.” It is necessary to identify or acknowledge our sins when we discover them. As a result of the acknowledgment we are forgiven. That is our word *aphiemi*. This is for believers.

**1 John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.**

**We have not sinned.** Per Wuest, “In verse eight, we have the denial of the indwelling sinful nature. In this verse we have the denial of specific acts of sin. The verb is in the perfect tense, which tense in Greek refers to an action completed in past time, having present results. The denial here is of any acts of sin committed in past time with the implication that none are able to be committed at present.<sup>9</sup>”

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8 Kenneth Wuest, In These Last Days, The Exegesis of 1 John page 103

9 Kenneth Wuest, In These Last Days, The Exegesis of 1 John page 106

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If you discover you are in sin, acknowledge your sin and move on in faith dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Now there is a fourth category of forgiveness. This is a believer forgiving someone that has harmed him.

The principle is found in both the Epistles and the Gospels.

**Ephesians 4:30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.**

**Ephesians 4:31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.**

**Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving (charizomai) each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.**

Jesus amplifies an application of personal forgiveness in His parable in Matthew chapter 18.

**Matthew 18:21 Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”**

**Matthew 18:22 Jesus \*said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.**

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**Matthew 18:23 “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves.**

**Matthew 18:24 When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him.**

**Matthew 18:25 But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made.**

**Matthew 18:26 So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’**

**Matthew 18:27 And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt.**

**Matthew 18:28 But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’**

**Matthew 18:29 So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’**

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**Matthew 18:30 But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.**

**Matthew 18: So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened.**

**Matthew 18:32 Then summoning him, his lord \*said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.**

**Matthew 18:33 Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’**

**Matthew 18:34 And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. 35 My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”**