

Church of God, The Eternal

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Forgiveness

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Dear Brethren:

As we begin to prepare for the upcoming Passover, our thoughts turn to forgiveness; for if we go before God's throne asking for forgiveness for our past year's sins, we understand that we first must forgive others. So just how do we go about forgiving? That is what I would like to talk about today in this *Monthly Letter*.

Did you know, brethren, that our salvation is at stake if we do not learn to forgive others? In fact, I guarantee that you will not find salvation if you are not willing to forgive. That is how important it is to forgive. Do you know that it is a sin not to forgive and that unless we can learn to forgive others, God will not forgive us? Forgiveness is what Christianity is all about. The forgiveness of sins is the central core of the whole Gospel.

We probably have not realized it before, but there are two conditions for receiving forgiveness from God. The first condition is that we have to repent of going our own sinful ways—then we come under God's grace and He forgives us of our sins.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8–9) [*New King James Version* throughout].

He forgives us no matter how bad we were.

The second condition is that we forgive others. That is what I want to dwell upon today.

Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you will receive them, and you will have them. And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him [Why?], that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. [This is a kind of warning.] But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses (Mark 11:24–26).

Do you see how important it is to be willing to forgive?

This is an unchangeable law of God. It is an absolute requirement of God that we forgive others, because if we do not, it is impossible for God to forgive us. Our eternal salvation is at stake! Even in the prayer outline that Christ gave to His disciples in Matthew 6:12, He instructs us to pray: "And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors." That is a pretty powerful statement, yet they are the words of Christ and they are in this outline so we will never forget.

There are some factors we need to understand about forgiveness if we are going to be successful at it, so that God can forgive us:

Factor #1: No Repentance Necessary

When we forgive others, it has nothing to do with whether or not they repent. I have heard many of God's people say: "Unless that person comes to me and apologizes, I will never forgive him." When I hear words like that I just shudder, because I know that unless they are willing to forgive they will not be in the Kingdom.

In the world, people only consider forgiving others if they first apologize or are sorry for their sins. One of the sins we can commit without even realizing it is gossip. We can sin against others and offend others just by gossiping about them. If we would forgive them, we would not gossip. When we forgive somebody we do not talk about it. God requires that we forgive others whether they are sorry for it or not. We do not have to wait until they apologize. God wants us to do it right away, whether they repent or not.

Notice Matthew 5:43–48:

You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use and persecute you . . .

Does it say, only if they repent? No!

This is a new way of thinking—different from what society around us believes. People around us in the world find it easy to love their friends and hate their enemies, but Christ said to love our enemies. Why? The next verse tells us:

[T]hat you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. [He showers His enemies with the same rain and blessings that He showers upon us.] For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall [become] perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Perfect in what? Become perfect in the art of forgiving.

Your forgiveness of others has nothing to do with them, but everything to do with you. You see, when you forgive others, nothing happens to them, but everything happens to you. If someone offends me and I do not forgive him, then I suffer inside with anger and hatred toward that person, hatred which can destroy me. That is why I have to forgive immediately, otherwise that hatred will cause me to walk in darkness (1 John 2:9–11) and eventually keep me out of God's Kingdom. I must forgive if I am to walk in the light. It is part of my salvation process. If I forgive, then I have peace because I am right with God. As far as that person is concerned, he must work out his own salvation with God, just like I do. No one can do it for you.

I would like to share with you an example. There was a young lady in the Worldwide Church of God that I worked with who did not like her dad because he divorced her mother, left them stranded, and went after another woman. She never forgave him for that. When it came time for her to be married, she asked me if I would walk her down the aisle. I asked her if her father was going to be there and she said,

"Yes, he's coming." Then I said, "I don't want to walk you down the aisle. What you need to do is forgive your father and ask him to do it." She asked, "Why?" I told her, so that God could forgive her and so she could get rid of the hatred within her, and then she could be really happy. Someday, I told her, he's going to come up in the resurrection and you will have the opportunity to teach him but only if you forgive him, so that you will be there. She then forgave him and asked him to walk her down the aisle, and they had a very nice wedding. From that point on, this young lady was much happier because she got rid of that hatred that can destroy us.

Human forgiveness means releasing the hurt that someone has inflicted upon you and letting it go; releasing the anger and letting it slide off you. God's way is not repaying evil for evil; that is the world's way. Look at Israel and the Palestinians today. Repaying evil for evil never brings peace. It only brings more hatred and war.

God wants us to live by another set of rules—rules the world has not yet tried. We are to smile when they frown. We are to love when they hate. We are to give when they want to get. When others hurt us, we give them love by forgiving them. If you do this you will have joy—the joy that Mr. Raymond Cole talked about in many of his sermons.

Note Matthew 5:38–39:

You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

Can you take a slap in the face for God's truth? You know when you tell someone God's truth, they will probably get offended at first and they might just take a swing at you. Can you take a slap in the face? Many of God's prophets have been slapped for speaking the truth.

Notice Christ's example of forgiveness toward His enemies:

And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots. And the people stood looking on.

But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God." [They did not realize that Christ was dying because of their sins.] The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine (Luke 23:33–36).

Yet Christ said in Luke 23:34, ". . . forgive them, for they know not what they do." The Roman soldiers did not apologize or ask Jesus for forgiveness before He prayed in that manner. Also, did Jesus' prayer actually forgive those Roman soldiers or, for that matter, all of us who are guilty of His blood? No, it did not. When we forgive someone, it does not make him or her right with God, but it does make us right with God. That is the important thing to remember.

Whether or not the people who killed Christ find forgiveness with God has nothing to do with Jesus asking God to forgive them. Jesus showed that His own attitude was right when He asked, "Father, forgive them . . ."

Now note Stephen's example:

And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he said this he fell asleep [he died from his wounds] (Acts 7:59–60).

As these murderers thrust stones at Stephen to kill him, in his dying words he prayed for the Lord to forgive them. What Stephen said, of itself, did not make the killers right with God, but it made Stephen right with God.

Both Jesus Christ and Stephen set an example of ultimate forgiveness. To forgive as someone is killing you takes a lot of God's love in you.

When you forgive another person, you are releasing yourself from anger and hatred while taking on God's nature of love, joy, and peace. That is how forgiveness works! It is moving from the place of anger and hatred, which are the works of the flesh, and allowing the love of God in you to shine through. This means first you must have God's love in you if it is going to shine through.

Factor # 2: Forgive Without Delay!

Where there are people, there will always be problems. We hurt each other—usually unintentionally—all the time. What should you do if you are wounded, or if you wound others?

Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:26–27, "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil." If you wait before forgiving, it just gives Satan more time to stir up strife. Do not wait until tomorrow to put out a fire. It will become bigger and harder to put out. If you can apologize or do something else to resolve a difficulty today, do it today. Do not wait until tomorrow. This world is filled with resentment, malice, spite and bitterness. Are you adding to the turmoil?

I would like to share an example concerning my neighbor. My neighbor did not like the way that I ran the waterspout from the runoff of the garage under the driveway and over into the row of trees separating our properties. It was still on my property, but some water ran into his yard. He did not like it, so he called the city and they sent someone out and we all talked about it and the man from the city said, "This man can do this, this is legal, but to help the neighbor you could turn the pipe and run it out to the street instead." Then my neighbor just went into a rage; he started swearing and stormed off to his house. The man from the city left and I sat there for awhile, and then I thought, "I have to do what I can to settle this." So I went over to his house and knocked on his door. He was sitting in the kitchen just as mad as he could be; he looked all flushed like he was going to have a heart attack. I said, "Why don't you come back out and just tell me what you want me to do and I'll do it. I don't want you to be angry with me." So he did, and I ended up taking the drain out. So now the water runs across the driveway and into the trees anyway without the help of a drain, but my neighbor was content.

God tells us in Romans 13:8–10:

Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

So, is there something you can do to smooth things out with your neighbor? Do it and gain a friendly neighbor and peace in doing so. Is not that our goal, to be peacemakers? But what if this person is not really sorry?

Factor # 3: Forgive, Even if They Are Not Really Sorry

Forgiving another has nothing to do with whether or not you evaluate their repentance as genuine. A person's apology, sorrow, or repentance can only be judged properly by God, because only God looks on the heart while man looks on the outward appearance. Even with God's Spirit working in you, it is impossible to know, as God does, the sincerity of another man's repentance.

In 1 Samuel 16:7, God is talking to Samuel, who was inspired with God's Spirit: "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." Can you look on the heart? I can't!

Are we failing to forgive others because we do not believe their sorrow is sincere enough or their repentance is genuine? Maybe we are looking for fruits worthy of repentance before we grant our forgiveness. We might use Matthew 3:8 to justify our actions: "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance." It is a condition necessary in preparation of receiving the Holy Spirit—something only God can decide.

We think we are not going to forgive until we see the fruits.

Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan, went out to him [referring to John the Baptist], and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, (Matthew 3:5–8).

John did not want to baptize them because they did not show the fruits. People use that verse to justify not forgiving others. But it applies to God. Continuing, ". . . and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father': For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones" (v. 9).

To what was he referring here? He was referring to the people around him who were coming to his baptism. He said God is going to raise up people for His Kingdom from those people if they do not repent and change. He will call somebody else.

"And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees." What was the ax? The ax was the Romans who were shortly going to come and destroy Jerusalem. The trees were the Pharisees and the Sadducees that the ax was going to cut down. That was an administration of death that Christ intended to abolish and replace with His own administration—one of forgiveness, mercy and love. "Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down, and thrown into the fire" (v. 10). Or in the short run, thrown into God's tribulation—something God will do to bring them to repentance. This is something only God can decide because He looks on the heart, and He can tell if you are going to bear fruit.

We see an example of this in Mark 11:12–26:

Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, "let no man eat fruit from you ever again." And His disciples heard it.

What Jesus had noticed about this tree was that it lacked that little growth that is on the tree in the spring. I can go out to my apple trees right after they blossom in the spring and I can see little apples starting to form. The same is true with figs, and you can eat those little nubbins (called pro-figs) that come on. But if that fruit is not there, one thing is evident: that tree will not produce fruit when harvest time comes. Christ has the ability to see that; and in each and every one of us Christ can look into our hearts and minds and know if we are going to bear fruit or not. If you are not going to bear fruit, then he baptizes you with a different baptism—the baptism of fire, of trials.

So our job then is to forgive, because we cannot tell if a person is going to bear fruit or not. Look at Saul before his conversion; there was no way you would think that he would produce any good fruit. But we did not know what Christ knew. Christ can look into a person and He can tell if he is going to bear fruit or not. It is our job to forgive and forgive and forgive until they do repent and begin to bear fruit, and not to judge a person before the end of his days.

How many times do we forgive? Matthew 18:21–22:

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

Do you know what Christ is saying here? He is saying you should forgive another of the same sin even if it were committed against you 490 times! In the process of time that person might repent and start bearing fruit.

Example: If someone sinned against you one time per day, that means you would be forgiving him for the next one and one-half years, and then not stop there. I do not believe we are to keep count. That is not forgiveness. Not that Christ is saying we should allow ourselves to be beaten up constantly. Nor is He establishing an exact count for how many times we should forgive. The point here is this: We should always be ready to forgive no matter what, not trying to determine when we should stop forgiving or if the person is repentant or not. That is not our business. The lesson is that we should never stop forgiving, because if we do, God will not forgive us.

Factor # 4: Forgive From the Heart

When you forgive, do you forgive from the heart? Do you really mean it? Is it important to forgive from the heart?

Matthew 18:23–35:

"Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king [Who is that king? Jesus Christ.] who wanted to settle accounts with his servants" (v. 23). The accounts he wanted to settle were this: Did his servants forgive each time they were offended, or were they bankrupt in the forgiving department? That is what this parable is about. When you do not forgive, you go into bankruptcy with God, and God will come and judge you accordingly and demand payment. "And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents" (v. 24). This servant had ten thousand opportunities to forgive, but he did not. He was bankrupt.

"But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore

fell down before him saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all' "(v. 26). In other words, he is saying, "I will make it up to you and be more forgiving. Please give me another chance."

"Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt" (v. 27). Ten thousand times this servant did not forgive, but still his master had compassion on him and forgave him because he promised he would pay all or that he would be more forgiving. But what did he do instead?

But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii [which is a pittance compared to the 10,000 talents], and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, "Pay me what you owe!" [Not very forgiving!] So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you all" And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt [not just part of it but I forgave you the whole thing] because you begged me [you promised you would do better]. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers [tormentors] until he should pay all that was due him (v. 28–34).

Now notice this next verse. It is important that you remember this. "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses" (v. 35). That is pretty serious.

How many times did you not forgive from the heart? Oh, you said you forgave him or her, but then you went out and gossiped it all around how this person offended you. You began to air his sins to everyone you know. That is not forgiving from the heart. Remember, if you do not want to be delivered to the tormentors, learn to forgive from the heart. That means you conceal the matter and uphold that person in love; you do not continually talk and gossip about his sins and weaknesses.

Remember the example in 2 Samuel 11:27, the story about how David had committed adultery and then to cover up the adultery, committed murder. Pretty serious. Did God forgive him? What did David say? "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O

Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared" (Psalm 130:3–4). If the Lord remembered all our iniquities, none of us would be able to stand. God has given us time to repent and to learn to fear Him by following His way. To do that, He has to forgive us when we sin, because if He kills us how can we repent and change?

How far does God go to forgive us? "As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). When God forgives, He forgets. God has a spiritual mind, and it is kind of like your computer. Have you ever had something on the computer that you wanted to put in the trash can? You pushed the button and it goes over to the trash can, and then the computer says, "Are you sure?" Then you press that button and swish, it's gone. You cannot bring that back. It is gone—that is how God forgets. David's sins were not once mentioned in the New Testament. God forgave him; He did not gossip them around.

"As a father pities his children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame" (v. 13–14). God knows of what we are made; Christ knows the problems we are having. He remembers that we are dust. We are just weak; we need to be forgiven because we are not perfect. It is something at which we must work.

Remember that forgiveness must be genuine, from the heart, or it does not count with God. Only God's love in you will enable you to forgive from the heart, especially if the trespass is serious; and sometimes our loved ones really put us to the test. My children have really put me to the test at times. Was I willing to forgive? I had to or God would not forgive me.

Factor # 5: Forgiving Loved Ones Is Harder!

Forgiving loved ones is sometimes harder to do than forgiving enemies. We may reason that our enemies do not know any better because they do not have God's truth. So we forgive *them*, but our loved ones should know better, and so in anger we may withhold forgiveness for long periods of time, failing to realize we are not right with God because of it. In fact, God is displeased when we do that. We must be willing to forgive immediately.

Colossians 3:12–24:

[A]s the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do (v. 12–13).

Paul is saying here, put it on. We do not have it yet; put on these tender mercies. We have to do that, brethren.

"But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection" (v. 14). Love is like the glue that bonds us together if we are willing to forgive. We cannot be bonded or glued together in love if we cannot forgive each other. We are going to offend each other from time to time, so be ready to forgive, otherwise the love will die and we will not be able to stay together.

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord (v. 15–16).

The peace of God cannot rule in our hearts if we cannot overlook each other's faults and be willing to forgive. We also cannot be one body and one spirit if we are not willing to forgive each other. Growing in grace and knowledge is what it is all about. We have to be able—in order to grow in grace and knowledge—to forgive one another.

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (v. 17). Whatever we do, we do it to God. Try and think of it that way. We forgive because God wants us to do it. Then we please God, and we would sooner please Him than ourselves. We all have a responsibility to perform.

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord" (v. 18). This can be very hard at times, ladies, but it makes the husband's job so much easier when he has a submissive wife rather than one who is full of resentment and anger toward her husband and is unforgiving of his faults.

"Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them" (v. 19). Husbands, if you do not forgive, you will build a bitterness toward your wife to the point where you

will not even love her anymore. Remember, God commands us to love our wives, and we cannot do that if we are unforgiving.

"Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord" (v. 20). To do this, young people, you will have to be forgiving, because parents are not perfect. Parenting is a learning process and they will make mistakes, so be forgiving.

"Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged" (v. 21). This means you will have to forgive them over and over again until they learn from their mistakes. If you condemn them, they will be discouraged and quit. They will give up unless we are willing to forgive.

Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as menpleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men (v. 22–23).

Do you work for your boss like you would for Christ, even if he is overbearing? To do that, you will have to be willing to forgive him when he is harsh or overbearing. God commands us to do so.

"[K]nowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ" (v. 24). You see, we serve the Lord when we are willing to work for and forgive an overbearing boss.

But how about ourselves? Are we willing to forgive ourselves? We have just learned that the people closest to us are usually the hardest to forgive. But there is one closer to you than any of your friends, and that is you. Who is it you do not like the most? Many times it is probably you. Many times we do not want to forgive ourselves because we know ourselves too well.

Example: When my brother, Bob, and I used to referee basketball games, sometimes certain individuals would get so down on themselves that they could not play anymore, and we would have to sit them out of the game for awhile. They would get so angry with themselves that they would literally curse themselves out—so loud that all could hear—and stay in that attitude all day. They were not able to forgive themselves, and the more they condemned themselves the worse their game became. So we would have to take them out of the game.

In the same way, we have been given incredible knowledge and foresight, not only into God's plan but also into our own sins and how much we must overcome. It is easy to become discouraged spiritually. But understand this: When we cannot forgive ourselves for things we have done, we are actually saying that we do not believe that the sacrifice of Christ will work for us. If God is willing to forgive us, should not we be willing to forgive ourselves? Yet many turn to suicide because they feel so ugly inside that they end up killing themselves. Like the suicide bombers in the news lately, when we do not forgive ourselves, we are literally bombing ourselves to death, along with the others around us whom we hurt. If you could learn to forgive, that would not happen.

For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death (2 Corinthians 7:10).

What does that mean? There are two kinds of sorrow—godly sorrow which leads to life, and worldly sorrow which leads to death. When we have godly sorrow, we can truly determine to change—to go the opposite way of our sins—and we find forgiveness with God. But if we listen to that other god—the god of this world, Satan—we will probably bring harm to ourselves, as many have done. After we understand that God will forgive us no matter how ugly we feel about ourselves, we must accept His sacrifice for us and ask Christ to clean us up on the inside so that we can be able to forgive ourselves.

Factor # 6: Vengeance Is Mine Says the Lord

Understanding this factor, or principle, will make it easier for us to forgive others. One of the main reasons we find it hard to forgive is that there is something in our nature—being encouraged by Satan, the devil—that wants revenge on the person who offended us. It is not humanly natural to allow God to handle the offense against us. We want to take care of the matter. We have to learn to let God take care of it. It takes a lot of faith in Christ's justice system to allow Him to handle it. If you understand His administration of forgiveness, you will be more willing to forgive. It will help you.

"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse" (Romans 12:14). If we can understand this principle—if we can live this principle—it will be much easier to let go and forgive others. We must not try to even the score. That is the world's way. Look at what is happening between Israel and the Palestinians today. Revenge can never lead to peace but only to more bloodshed, ugliness, heartache, and misery.

This is what God tells us in Romans 12:19: "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord." Our human drive to find vengeance, to get even, will hinder us from being able to forgive, if we allow it to take root in our minds. That is why we have to starve that nature—that fleshly nature in us—and put on Christ.

Just as important as the law of forgiveness is every other law of God. In other words, God promises that whatever people sow they will reap. If others hurt you, they have to deal with God. He will see to it that they will reap what they sow until they repent or learn so that they can feel the hurt that they have caused others to experience. They will have to deal with God face to face for their sins. Again, that will be between them and God. God will take care of it; we do not have to worry about it.

We must not want to "play God" and strike them down. God is patient and will allow them time to repent. Be thankful that He is the same way toward us. If a person who has offended you does not repent, he will not find forgiveness or peace with God until he does. That is how you heap coals upon his head; you overcome evil with good, to convict the person, to allow God's Spirit to convict him. If you repay evil for evil, God's Spirit cannot work anymore. That is why we need to forgive, so that God's Holy Spirit can work.

Factor # 7: Real Forgiveness Comes From God—From the Indwelling of God's Holy Spirit

If God is not living in you, it will be harder for you to forgive, so use the spiritual tools every day and put on Christ so that you will have the power to forgive. Remember, forgiveness is about you, individually. If you are willing to forgive, it will allow you to move on and not let the sin of unforgiveness cause you to have anger, hatred, and bitterness toward others. Release it; let it go. Do it 490 times. Do it 490,000 times if necessary. Do not let the sun go down until you have forgiven others.

Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: [Give what? Give forgiveness and it will be given to you.] good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you (Luke 6:37–38).

"He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given" (Proverbs 19:17). When we forgive, we lend to the Lord and the Lord promises to pay us back in full.

Remember these factors when it is your turn to forgive and then forgive completely, because only then will we be united as one body in Christ. Real forgiveness will turn to love, and love is the glue that will hold us together in this little remnant church.

In sincerest love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard W. Litz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard W. Litz