

Forgiving People Who Wrong Against Us Is a Choice

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ABSTRACT: This study was conducted to provide believers with an understanding of choosing to forgive those who have wronged them. Many believers are unable to forgive. Having forgiven them but being unable to forget the mistakes of others, and even being unable to make peace with themselves and those who have hurt them, Many believers do not understand the benefits of forgiving others and hold grudges against those who have hurt them. The research method is qualitative. Data collection was carried out through literature studies from various perspectives: Theological, Psychological, and Science. The results show that Jesus commanded believers to forgive those, who have wronged them, even up to seventy times seven times (Matthew 18:21-22). He not only commanded but also gave an example. On the cross in His suffering, He taught believers to say the best prayer for those who had persecuted and crucified Him. He said "Forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). This is evidence of the humility exemplified by Jesus. In His suffering, He still taught us to pray for the good of those who had hurt Him. This prayer also contains a command for believers to forgive those who offend. The risk for humans who do not want to forgive those who have wronged them is that they will be hurt and suffer in their lives (Matthew 18:34). Forgiving is the last message of Jesus to believers thus forgiving is very important. By forgiving people will be free from burdens and suffering, so that their lives will feel relieved and happy. Forgiving is not easy to do, and can only be done by people who have humility and surrender to the Lord Jesus. Believers must choose to forgive those who have wronged them. This is the best choice.

KEYWORDS: Forgiveness, Grace, Humility, Compassion, Happiness

I. INTRODUCTION

Forgiving does not mean forgetting the mistakes of those who have hurt us. Forgiving also does not require us to reconcile with those who have hurt us. Forgiving does not free the guilty person from legal responsibility.¹ Forgiving is a difficult word to say or even do, especially when we feel in the right position according to our views and feel very hurt by the words or attitudes of others towards us. Feelings of being hurt sometimes make our ego rise and bring up an arrogant attitude to fortify and show 'self-existence'. This is a human or fleshly attitude, so that we are bound and entangled so that we cannot forgive. Jesus taught believers to forgive those who wronged them. He not only commanded it but also demonstrated it. During His suffering on the cross, at the peak of His agony, when those He loved crucified Him, what came out of His mouth were not words of reproach, hatred, curses, or insults. While enduring the pain, the words that came from His mouth were a prayer: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34, KJV)

Jesus teaches believers to love one another by releasing forgiveness. He realized that in a short time, he would die on the cross. He used this moment to give a final message to mankind to live in love with one another by releasing forgiveness. God knows very well what the true character of humans is. Without love and forgiveness, humans will not be able to live out the Word of God. Forgiving the guilty is the last message of Jesus Christ during His life. This means that forgiving the guilty is very important and must be done by believers. God Himself has lived by giving an example, releasing forgiveness at the peak of His suffering. This example must be followed and imitated by believers if they want to live according to His will. God teaches that in facing everything, after His death, especially in facing painful things, believers should always call out to Him in prayer. There is no need to look for scapegoats, by looking for other people's mistakes, especially those who have hurt our hearts. With humility come to God. Pray for our best, and so best so who have hurt us. The cross teaches believers that in living life there are difficult times, times of pain, and times of helplessness. The Lord Jesus taught his people to accept the experience of faith that he taught. God allows his people to face hardship and pain. How humans respond to pain is an individual choice. The response to the pain experienced will describe who is in power behind the flesh (human). Is it controlled by the Holy Spirit or another spirit? All the

¹ Lysa TerKeurst (2020), *The Forgiveness Journal: A Guided Journey to Forgiving What You Can't Forget*. Amazon.com

Answers can be seen and felt from the fruits produced. The Lord Jesus in the suffering and pain He suffered still taught to release forgiveness. This shows His extraordinary compassion. This is God's way, of using miraculous things to bring peace to the hearts of His people. There is no hostility. There is no argument. There is no hatred. God Himself is present to reconcile us with ourselves and process so that believers become the best people in the eyes of God. Releasing forgiveness is the best way taught by the Lord Jesus in dealing with suffering. The choice is in the hands of humans, whether to follow Jesus or to follow the flesh. With humility pray to God to release forgiveness or curse and revile people who have wronged us. Being compassionate to others or harbouring hatred and resentment for the mistakes of others. Freeing yourself from the prison of heartache or remaining huddled in the prison of heartache. Becoming a happy person or becoming a person full of anger and hatred. Be obedient to God's Word or be a disobedient who hurts God's heart. Jesus's final message before His death is an important message for humanity. However, humans are given free will to respond to God's commands with all the consequences. This is why the author is interested in researching "Forgiving Those Who Wrong Us Is a Choice".

Research Method : The research was conducted using qualitative methods. Data collection was conducted through a literature review. Literature sources were taken from Bible verses, books, journals and other relevant sources. Data analysis was conducted through studies from various perspectives: Theological, Psychological, and Science.

II. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

"Forgive" comes from the root word forgiveness, which means release from demands for making a mistake. So forgiveness is the act of giving forgiveness or forgiving an action that is considered mistakes. Psychologists generally define forgiveness as "a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed you, regardless of whether they deserve your forgiveness."² So forgiveness is a decision that is made consciously and intentionally, towards the person who hurt you, regardless of whether the person who hurt you deserves forgiveness. "Forgiveness" in Luke 23:24 is called ἀφῆμι (aphēmi-Greek), while in Hebrew, it is called נָשָׁח (nasa). In this case, forgiveness has a one-way meaning, namely God's forgiveness to the people. So, forgiveness is a relationship between God and His people. Forgiveness is a relationship between an individual and God. Thus, 'forgiveness' is an individual's commitment to God. So "forgiving" can be defined as a conscious action taken by someone. This is a form of committing to God to release forgiveness to the person who has hurt his heart. Forgiving does not mean forgetting. Forgiving also does not mean making the guilty person free from punishment.

Forgiving does not have to make peace with the person who hurt the heart. Luke 23:34 gives an example of the Lord Jesus in dealing with the suffering and distress felt because of the actions of people around us, whom we love. If the suffering we feel is caused by people we do not know, it may not be as painful as the suffering and betrayal carried out by people we love. The Lord Jesus taught us to forgive those we know and love when they do things that disappoint us. This is evidence of a real example of showing compassion for others. In everyday life, if someone does something wrong to us, hurts us, or causes trouble in our hearts, we tend to hate them, fight them, curse them, or do other evil things that are not pleasing to God. Expressing excessive negative emotions without healthily processing them will not solve the problem. It will only add to the wounds in our hearts.³ This needs to be a concern for believers so that they are wiser in expressing emotions, especially in negative emotions. Expressing negative emotions in an unhealthy way will drain energy and have a very bad impact on health, both for oneself and others.⁴ Many diseases arise because of a person's inability to manage emotions. Stress, depression, and even suicidal thoughts indicate that someone is very stressed in their life and unable to manage their emotion well. This will affect their relationships with themselves, others, and God. People express their emotions is influenced by: cultural factors, parenting, gender, and others.⁵ However,

² Greater Good Magazine: Science-Based Insights for A Meaningfull Life. Accessed: March 28, 2025.

<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/forgiveness/definition>

³ Sri Mulyani, dkk (2023), The Effect of Restoring Your Heart (RYH) Ministry, Finding Roots of Bitterness, and Emotional Management, on Heart Healing: A Quantitative Study in Indonesia, Pharos Journal of Theolgy 104(3).

https://www.pharosjot.com/uploads/7/1/6/3/7163688/article_23_vol_104_3_indonesia.pdf

⁴ Sri Mulyani, Sutrisno (2023). Pentingnya Mengekspresikan Emosi Dengan Cara yang Sehat untuk Mencapai Kesuksesan didalam Kehidupan. Jurnal MADANI, Vol 1 No. 7 (2023)

<https://jurnal.penerbitdaarulhuda.my.id/index.php/MAJIM/article/view/618>

⁵ Safiruddin Al Baqi (2015), Ekspresi Emosi Marah, Buletin Psikologi 23(1) Juni: 22-30.

<https://jurnal.ugm.ac.id/buletinpsikologi/article/view/10574/7969>

Jesus reminded believers throughout the world, regardless of culture, gender, and anything else. Believers must emulate Him in self-control and expressing emotions healthily as Jesus taught. When we are not to forgive those who have wronged us, the fleshly nature that appears tries to defend ourselves, looks for scapegoats, and seeks self-satisfaction. This action can lead us into sinful acts and distance ourselves from God. When we hate those who have wronged us, there will be no peace in our hearts. We are unable to smile sincerely at those who have hurt us. There is no joy in our hearts. Unable to be friendly, polite, and humble. All this is because there is no peace in our hearts. Sometimes many people are not aware that amid difficulties and suffering God is present to provide help to others.⁶ An unpeaceful mood indicates that the Holy Spirit does not reign in our hearts. If there is envy, anger, hatred, and other negative emotions, this shows that we are not controlled by the Holy Spirit. Especially if those feelings are manifested in evil deeds, such conditions warn us that we are far from God. The manifestation of evil attitudes is not from the Lord Jesus. Because the Lord Jesus comes to bring peace (Phil 4:7; Rom 15:13; Isa 9:6; John 14:27; Matt 5:9; Heb 12:14).

Luke 23:24 says "Forgive". Judging from the context, this verse is an example of the Lord Jesus for believers in trouble to remain focused on God, come and pray to God, asking for forgiveness for people who have caused wounds in their hearts. So forgiveness is a personal relationship between the injured individual and God. Meanwhile, in everyday language, the ending 'lah' indicates an 'order, invitation, advice or affirmation'. If these words were spoken by the Lord Jesus, then the ending 'lah' can be interpreted as a command.⁷ So, the word 'forgive' can also be interpreted as a command from God to His people. When their hearts are hurt, disappointed, and suffer as a result of other people's actions, believers are obliged to forgive those they consider guilty. Thus 'forgiving' is mandatory for believers, so that people who do not want to forgive people who have wronged them have sinned, because they have violated God's commands.

The Bible reminds us that the punishment for sin is death (Genesis 2:17; Proverbs 14:27; John 8:52; Romans 6:23; James 1:15). Therefore, on the cross, He reminded His people again to remain vigilant and on guard so that believers do not fall into sin. People who fall into sin, it means they live in the world of the dead because death has mastered them. On the cross, He reminded His people always to surrender fully to God. The last message of the Lord Jesus before His death is something important for mankind. However, humans are given free will to respond to God's commands with all their consequences.⁸ That is why "forgiving those who have wronged us is a choice". Believers will choose to forgive those who have wronged us even though the process is painful. This choice shows themselves as people who are obedient to Christ. The opposite choice shows a person who is disobedient and unfaithful to Christ.

Each choice has consequences. People who are obedient and faithful to Christ will receive His glory. By releasing forgiveness, he will feel relief and peace in living his life. But for those who are not obedient and faithful to Christ, his rebellion will result in him being in prison, the shackles of sin, and unable to enjoy life. Believers will choose God's way of forgiving those who have wronged them. If we are obedient and loyal to God by being willing to forgive people who have wronged us, then this shows that we:

1. Able to show oneself as a person who is obedient and loyal to the Lord Jesus "God has forgiven you, you also do the same" (Colossians 3:13)
2. We will receive the gift of forgiveness from our Father in heaven "If you forgive people their trespasses, your Father in heaven will forgive us also" (Matthew 6:14).

"Forgiveness" in Matthew 6:14-15, is called "Aphiemi" emphasizes releasing oneself from feelings of revenge, providing forgiveness to the person who wronged him as a prerequisite for receiving forgiveness from God.⁹ This illustrates how difficult it is for humans to forgive, those who have wronged them. When humans feel

⁶ Kristinus Sutrisno (2023), Peran Roh Kudus dalam Kehidupan Gereja dan Orang Beriman di Tengah Pandemi, *Divinitas: Jurnal Filsafat dan teologi Kontekstual* 1(1) Januari:87-106. <https://ejournal.usd.ac.id/index.php/Divinitas/article/view/6603>

⁷ Irena "Akhiran Lah", Jawaban Santai terhadap Berbagai Pertanyaan yang Mengganjal. Diakses: 28 Maret 2025. <https://perpusteknik.com/akhir-an-lah/>

⁸ Basrianiksum Labudo (2022), Kehendak Bebas bagi Manusia dalam Perspektif Alkitab dan Penerapannya bagi Gereja Tuhan Saat Ini. *Lentera Nusantara: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 2(1):68-77. <https://jurnal.sttkn.ac.id/index.php/Lentera/article/view/181>

⁹ Ministry Voice, Menjelajahi arti Aphiemi dalam Bahasa Yunani,. <https://www.ministryvoice.com/id/aphiemi-in-greek/>

Right, they tend to be arrogant and conceited. God is not pleased with such an attitude, which does not reflect God's mercy. It seems that forgiveness is a transactional act between humans and God. This is because God knows the true character of humans with their flesh. God wants to teach believers always to be compassionate to the others, so can forgive others with humility. This attitude is exemplified by God and is pleasing to God. The Lord Jesus gave an example so we can forgive another and taught people to be willing to forgive, all for the good of humanity itself. This is what humanity does not realize. The purpose of forgiveness is the benefit of humans themselves, not for the benefit of others or people who cause hurt. It does not mean that God defends people who have hurt and wounded our hearts. God teaches believers, to think before acting because our decisions will affect ourselves. By forgiving those who are guilty, God will forgive our sins. This makes humanity aware that they are imperfect individuals, so they must love and forgive each other. Forgiveness is a release or release from sin or guilt.¹⁰ Forgiveness is done continuously like God forgiving human sins. Matthew 18:21-22 tells the story of Peter's conversation with Jesus. Peter asked Jesus, how many times he should forgive his brother who sinned against him, seven times.? Jesus' answer was surprising, namely, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times". This shows that forgiveness must be done perfectly.

Then Jesus gave an illustration. There was a servant who was in debt to his master. Because he did not pay his debt, he begged his master for mercy. His master was very wise. He forgave his debt. However, on his way home from his master's house, he met his brother who owed him much less than the debt that had been written off by his master. He strangled and asked his brother to pay his debt soon. When the information about the incident was heard by his master, he was angry and punished the ungrateful servant. This illustration shows that believers have been forgiven and have their sins redeemed by the cross of Jesus. For this reason, believers must forgive people who sin against them. So that God will not be angry and punish him. We know that God's punishment is death. So, a person who does not want to forgive someone who sins against him means he is violating God's commands. In the illustration from Matthew 18 with the passage title "The Parable of Forgiveness". Jesus illustrated the Kingdom of Heaven when the King was faced with a man who owed ten thousand talents, but he was unable to pay it off. The King was moved with compassion to repay his debt. However, when the servant met another servant who owed him one hundred dinars (much less than the debt that had been cleared by the King), he grabbed his friend and strangled him so that his friend would pay his debt to him. When his friend begged for mercy, he refused and handed him over to prison. The King who heard this was very disappointed. He was angry with his servant whose debt had been forgiven. The King handed over the servant who did not want to love his friend and handed him over to the executioners until he paid all his debts. This is the picture of a believer who has been forgiven by God and even had his sins atoned for on the cross, but who does not want to forgive those who have wronged him. This is not pleasing to God.

If a believer can not forgive his brother with all his heart, then he will experience suffering in his life. He will live in prison. His feelings are not peaceful, anxiety, discomfort, anger, hatred, resentment, disappointment, heartache, and various other negative emotions arise. People whose lives are controlled by negative emotions certainly can not feel happy. Their energy is drained only to manage and control the negative emotions they feel. Their lives will become increasingly unenthusiastic, and their spirits will weaken, full of complaints and grumbling, because they feel the great burden of life. Being imprisoned in negative emotions that burden life is similar to life in the world of the dead. Life is controlled by the flesh, there is no peace and happiness.

God wants believers to have the ability to forgive anyone who wrongs them so that believers have an awareness of the following 3 things:

1. Awareness to live in truth (Psalm 86:11).
2. Awareness that humans are not perfect (Matthew 6:2).
3. Awareness of having the ability to guard the heart, thoughts, words and actions (Lev 19:18; Rom 12:19; Eph 4:31-32).

Awareness to live in truth : For humans to always live in truth, Psalm 86:11 teaches believers to fear God. The attitude of forgiving those who are guilty will be manifest in the attitude of fearing God. To forgive, we must humble ourselves, suppress our egos, and make peace with the situation and conditions. By choosing to forgive, we will guard our hearts, not seek revenge. Thoughts will be well-organized because there is a deep sense of acceptance.

¹⁰ Yohanes Sukendar (2017), Pengampunan menurut Kitab Suci Perjanjian Baru, SAPA: Jurnal Katekik dan Pastoral 2(2). <https://e-journal.stp-ipi.ac.id/index.php/sapa/article/view/38>

There will be no more bitterness, anger, rage, strife, slander, and evil caused by forgiving. By forgiving each other, good communication will be built, so that we are able to be friendly to one another, full of affection. Thus, a heaven filled with peace will present in our lives.

Awareness that humans are not perfect : The story of Saul who hated David so much and wanted David dead because he was triggered by jealousy. The jealousy that controlled Saul made God's voice no longer heard. Saul's life was no longer in the loving hands of God. So his attitude, actions, and decisions were far from God's will. Saul forgot that he was just an imperfect human created by God. His hatred for David made him spend his energy, teaching David wherever he fled to killing him. Because David was a person who feared God, he avoided Saul. David had no intention of harming or killing Saul, even though Saul hated him so much and chased him to kill him. Because David was a person who feared God, David was free from the death that Saul wanted. In fact Saul himself was killed, died by the sword. Saul is a picture of a person who is bound by worldly lust. He did not realize that humans are imperfect. Saul forgot that he was human, and would not be able to do anything without the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Saul was unable to hear God's voice because he was covered in anger, jealousy, and hatred. The end of Saul's life taught mankind to always rely only on God and not rely on their strength, because humans are weak and helpless when not in God's power. This shows that humans are not perfect, so they must love and forgive each other. From David's side, because of his fear of God. God enabled him to decide to forgive, not only with words, but he lived it with works and deeds. The act of not killing Saul, even though there was an opportunity was done because of his fear of God. David did not hold a grudge, by showing compassion, namely taking care of Jonathan's son, Saul's grandson. He became a person who was present as a blessing to people, even those who wronged him. He came to bring peace.

Awareness to have the ability to guard the heart, mind, speech and actions : The story of Joseph, who was sold by his brothers because of jealousy. In his life journey, Joseph finally became the right hand of the King of Egypt. When drought hit Egypt and Canaan, his brothers came before him to buy food. His brothers did not know Joseph, but Joseph recognized his brothers. Joseph feels very angry remembering what his brothers had done to him. Genesis 42:18 states that Joseph realized that because he feared God, so, Joseph released forgiveness. By realizing himself as a person who feared God, God changed his anger, disappointment and anger into a humble person. He was able to control himself and make peace with the situation. He appeared to be a wise person in God's guidance. Even after the death of his father Jacob, Joseph manifested his forgiveness to his brothers by promising to bear the lives of his brothers and their descendants (Genesis 50:21).

From the illustration of the three considerations of awareness above, it is very understandable why someone finds it difficult to forgive someone who has wronged him. The inherent and dominant nature of human flesh will make humans unable to hear God's voice. Humanly, some of the following reasons may be the answer;¹¹

1. The mistake is too big to be forgiven
2. The guilty person does not want to admit his mistake
3. The perpetrator does not truly regret what was done
4. The perpetrator does not apologize
5. The perpetrator will do it again
6. The perpetrator has done it before
7. The perpetrator did it intentionally
8. Someone must punish the perpetrator
9. I don't like the perpetrator
10. I don't like to forgive the perpetrator
11. If I forgive, I must be friendly to the perpetrator

From the 11 indicators above. There are 8 indicators (No. 1 until 8) (no. 9 until 11) refer to the person who did us wrong. Only three indicators refer to ourselves. This illustrates how selfish humans are and have a tendency to find scapegoats by blaming others. This attitude is as described in the life of Saul who hated David so much, that he could not let go of forgiveness and ended up being unable to hear God's voice. Not being able to forgive those who have wronged us will lead our lives into a spiritual prison.¹² This can be the root of bitterness if not immediately processed in a healthy way. William Fergus Martin¹³ provides tips on the "Four Steps of

¹¹ Processing Pain, Work book Restoring Your Heart.

¹² Sri Mulyani, et al (2024), Early Detection Emotional Health with Apps Saluti (Sadar Akan Luka Hati) Based On Android In Indonesia, IJM CER 6(2): 198-211. <https://www.ijmcer.com/volume-6-issue-2/>

¹³ William Fergus Martin (2020). Four Steps of Forgiveness; A Way to happiness, freedom and

Forgiveness” as a powerful way to achieve freedom, happiness, and success. The four steps of forgiveness are:

1. Write down and mention who we need to forgive
2. Acknowledge how you feel about the situation at hand, do it openly and honestly
3. Write down the benefits if we forgive him
4. Commit to yourself to forgive him.

These four steps can be done in a quiet moment in solitude as a form of reflection. However, it can also be done by telling a safe person we trust. If we are ready, we can also communicate directly with the person we consider to be the source of the problem. In this case, it is necessary to understand the method of delivery, the situation and the conditions. So that the problem can be resolved properly and appropriately. Crying when we reflect can be a relief. Scientifically, tears that fall when we are sad contain manganese. Under a microscope, the tears are very irregular in shape. Meanwhile, the structure of tears that fall when people cry because they feel happy will be neatly arranged.¹⁴ So crying when we feel sad is highly recommended to relieve the tightness in the chest. While praying for God's wisdom, so that problems can be resolved properly. We are given the strength and ability to forgive those who have wronged us. Humility is a characteristic of a new human being. The ability to forgive is only possessed by a humble person. In our humility, God works and reigns. In humility the Holy Spirit is present and strengthens us, guiding us to do things according to God's will. And all of God's plans are the best plans for us.

With the Holy Spirit reigning in our hearts, we will be able to take actions that fear God. As exemplified by David in his escape to a cave, even though he had the opportunity to kill Saul, David did not do it because David feared God. Also, in the example given by Joseph because of his fear of God, he was able to humble himself and decide to forgive his brothers, and Joseph's life became a blessing to his extended family. By forgiving, life will feel happy. There is no burden because the Holy Spirit controls us, and teaches us to express happiness with gratitude and other positive emotions. Forgiveness has been proven to improve mood, increase optimism, and protect us from anger, stress, anxiety, and depression.¹⁵ The Holy Spirit teaches us to think positively, so that it is reflected in words and attitudes that build, both for ourselves and those around us. With the Holy Spirit reigning within us, we will be able to seek God's wisdom, learning from the various things that God has allowed us to go through.

III. CONCLUSION

Forgiving is God's command, so released forgiving is obligatory. The person who is most hurt if we do not want to forgive is ourselves. Forgiving is not easy to do. For that, God gives humans free will to make a choice; obey God by releasing forgiveness to get peace in the heart, or refuse to give forgiveness so that their lives are bound by sin. Believers choose to forgive because they have the awareness to live in truth. The awareness that they are imperfect humans, and the awareness to have the ability to guard their hearts, thoughts, words and actions so that life feels calm and happy. By forgiving, our minds will be calmer so that we are able to manage our emotions better. Forgiving is the gateway or first step to processing pain more healthily. The key to having the ability to make the decision to forgive others is humility and surrender to God alone. With humility and surrender to God, it means allowing God to work in us. God Himself will enable us to decide to forgive those who have wronged us. Believers must choose to forgive those who have wronged them. This is the best choice.

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