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Forgiven to Forgive Leviticus 6:7

Intro: If you recall, the last 2 offerings (purification/ restitution) go together as they both deal with atoning for the sins of the worshipper. The purification offering focuses mainly on atoning for sins of ritual defilement while the restitution offering addresses sins related to the profaning of holy things; whether it's a holy item (or person) of the sanctuary or the holy name of the Lord by making a false oath. To disrespect the Lord's holy property or name by treating it as an everyday, common thing is to disrespect the Lord Himself. Thus, this sin was seen as a serious act of unfaithfulness against the covenant, a literal betrayal of covenant loyalty that bordered on treachery.

This offering not only addressed unfaithfulness to the Lord but also unfaithfulness to fellow Israelites. The section in 6:1-7 deals with the cheating or robbing of goods from a neighbor; usually involving some kind of trickery or deceit. What is interesting about these last 2 offerings is that they both involve some very intentional sins but these sins are then treated as though they are unintentional. Of course, this requires not only confession and repentance on the part of the sinner but they also are required to not just make the injured party whole but to actually improve their situation by making full restitution and then adding 20% to it. Clearly, this deliberate act would necessarily come from a heart that was truly repentant of their sin.

This restitution offering illustrates the solemn fact that it is a very costly thing for people to commit sin and for God to cleanse sin. Our sins offend God and hurt others. True repentance will always bring with it a desire for restitution. The truly repentant sinner will want to make things right with God and with those whom we've sinned against. But, in the OT sacrificial system, forgiveness comes only because of the death of an innocent substitute. We've also seen that the repentant worshipper was required to make the injured party whole before they were able to bring their restitution offering to the tabernacle and receive forgiveness from the Lord. And yet, despite the obvious intentionality of their sin, it was accounted as unintentional and they would receive forgiveness. In fact, 6:7 indicates that any of these trespasses can be forgiven. The death of a substitute made

atonement but it was nothing less than an act of sovereign grace that accounts intentional sins as being unintentional.

This divine grace that allows intentional sins to be cleansed and forgiven comes from the heart of a loving, forgiving God. It is a wonderful gift; unearned, unprecedented and unexplainable. To be able to stand before God forgiven and free from the guilt and burden of sin is a glorious relief; it frees us to live and serve our Lord and Savior with rigor and complete abandon. We are able to run the race that is set before us, having finally laid aside the weight and the sin which so easily besets us. Being forgiven is glorious but there is another side to this coin.

As I have stated many times, every blessing that comes from God comes preset with a corresponding responsibility that is just as important and necessary as the blessing itself. I'm sure I haven't done proper justice to describing the blessing of forgiveness but in the short time that we have, I'd like to address this important responsibility because it has immediate impact on the spiritual walks of modern Christians. In fact, in my own ministry, the most devastation in Christian's lives and homes has resulted from a failure to uphold this responsibility. I have seen plenty of Christians fall away from the faith or simply fall out of fellowship with the Body of Christ and for the most part, it has been due to a failure in this particular area.

What is this responsibility? Well, we've seen how the Lord expects us to first make things right with those we have sinned against before we can expect any forgiveness from Him ([Matt 5:23-24](#)). But what if we're the offended party? What if we're the ones who have been injured, slighted or sinned against? What if the sin or offence was done very much intentionally? How are we to react? Are we supposed to just lay down and take it? Does God expect us to be door mats for the world and even, on occasion, our own brothers and sisters in the faith? These are legitimate questions because we all have a sense of what is right and wrong and what is fair play but the short answer to these hard questions is a very difficult yes! Now, before you shut me out, let me qualify that answer with Scripture.

In our last study, we looked at how Jesus was displayed as the restitution offering ('asham) in [Isa 53:10](#) an offering for sin. We saw how the "we" group in the text had intentionally mishandled (manhandled) the Servant figure (Jesus) and yet, their intentional sins was accounted as unintentional

because they sinned ignorantly. In fact, they thought they were doing God a service by inflicting punishment on the one they considered already being punished by God.

This theme of sins committed in ignorance also continues in the NT. One of the most famous is our Lord's last few words from the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" ([Lk 23:34](#)). Then there's Stephen's declaration in [Acts 3:17](#), "Now, fellow Israelites, I know you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders;" referring to their treatment of Jesus leading to His execution. There are more examples: [1 Tim 1:13-14](#) (ignorance) and [Heb 5:1-3](#) (ignorant and going astray...weakness). There are plenty more but these few will suffice.

What we should take note of in these passages is that though the sins referred to are said to have been committed in ignorance, they were still committed very intentionally. Forgiveness is offered to sinners who'd been very intentional in committing their sinful acts, yet they are reckoned as having committed them in ignorance, even unintentionally. This is not some religious hocus-pocus or absolution provided by some human agent; it's the decree of God Himself, the same God who designated His Son as a guilt offering for sin, whose precious blood renders our intentional sins as unintentional ones, and who atones for them by the command and decreed of the Father.

Yes, the heavy lifting for our redemption was accomplished by Jesus on the cross and it was done completely! Thus, because of His perfect atoning work on the cross, there's nothing left for us to do to affect our own redemption. All we can do is worship the One who has become a restitution offering for us, living out the requirements of this offering in His own death as a sacrifice for sin. But, we should also that if God has shown such grace to us in sympathizing with us in our weakness, to forgive us in our ignorance and to reckon our deliberate sins to be unintentional ones, then that means it is imperative for us to extend the same grace, mercy, compassion and forgiveness to those who have sinned against us. The question is never, "Should I forgive or not?" Forgiveness isn't optional, it's imperative!

How can I say this? You know me, I'm not making this up; this isn't my opinion – I'm just reading from a script! [Matt 6:14-15](#); [Matt 18:35](#); [Mark 11:25](#); [Luke 17:3-4](#) – note that while we should always have an attitude that's ready to forgive, actual forgiveness is conditional on repentance. Also

Eph 4:32; Col 3:13. Do we get the picture?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor martyred by the Nazis for speaking out against Hitler and the Holocaust, put it this way, “There is another kind of suffering and shame which the Christian is not spared. While it is true that only the sufferings of Christ are a means of atonement, yet since He has suffered for and borne the sins of the whole world and shares with His disciples the fruits of His passion, the Christian also has to undergo temptation, he too has to bear the sins of others; he too must bear their shame and be driven like a scapegoat from the gate of the city. ‘Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ’ (Gal 6:2). As Christ bears our burdens, so ought we to bear the burdens of our fellow-men. The law of Christ, which is our duty to fulfill, is the bearing of the cross. My brother’s burden which I must bear is not only his outward lot, his natural characteristics and gifts, but quite literally his sin. And the only way to bear that sin is by forgiving it in the power of the cross of Christ in which I now share. Thus the call to follow Christ always means a call to share the work of forgiving men their sins. Forgiveness is the Christlike suffering which it is the Christian’s duty to bear.”

In short, if we as Christians have been forgiven by God in our ignorance and even our intentional sins, then, if we refuse to forgive, we are not forgiven. I don’t mean we lose our salvation or are refused salvation but, as God’s child, we can’t expect the Father to forgive our daily sins and restore us back into intimate fellowship with Him if we refuse to forgive those who sin against us. Even in the Lord’s Prayer, the request for forgiveness of sins is couched in the understanding that we will forgive those who sinned against us: forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors...Mt 6:12; And forgive our sins. For we also forgive everyone...Luke 11:4. Do we? But, they did it on purpose! Yes, and you’ve taken it personally, I understand. But, did the Roman soldiers mean to put the crown of thorns on Jesus’ head? Did they mean to slam the reed down on that crown? Maybe it was all accidental but when they pulled out His beard; that was intentional and very personal!

I am in no way suggesting that forgiveness is easy – it’s not! It’s not easy and it’s very costly and yet, Jesus tells us to take up our own cross and follow Him. Sometimes we use the language of cross-bearing far too lightly and far too casually. The cross we are called to bear is not some physical ailment – whether it’s an ingrown toenail or a deadly cancer. It’s not some

financial setback or the loss of a job. It's not loneliness or the loss of loved ones.

No, our cross is those things we actively do to share in the sufferings of Christ. And since Jesus, when He was crucified, asked the Father to forgive those who played their various roles in His crucifixion, it would stand to reason that the act of taking up our cross and following Jesus involves first and foremost, forgiving those whom we consider to have done us wrong. Plus, it must be an action we are prepared to do every day of our lives. We are called to take up our cross daily and follow Him. We ask God to forgive those who have trespassed against us. We can't very well ask God to forgive them unless we are prepared to forgive them also. The Christian's daily cross is to forgive sin.

This spiritual principle contains some spiritual benefits, as well as emotional and even physical ones. Being unwilling to forgive others never really hurts the other party; most of the time they don't even realize they've harmed you. Holding to an unforgiving attitude only hurts you. Bitterness creeps in and steals your joy and if it is allowed to fester, it can cause emotional and even physical ailments. But the act of forgiveness carries more than just spiritual, emotional and physical benefits; it primarily provides evangelistic benefits. What do I mean?

Earlier, we read Jesus' prayer on the cross from [Lk 23:34](#), "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." It's interesting to consider exactly who Jesus was praying for that day and who were involved in His arrest, trial and crucifixion. Among the participants that Luke lists were: Roman soldiers (including a centurion and regular soldiers); Pharisees; Priests and Sadducees (primary members of the Sanhedrin); and a large crowd. But, when we turn to the Book of Acts, Luke's 2nd volume, it's instructive to note some of the converts to the gospel that Luke points out: a Roman centurion ([Acts 10](#)); a Roman jailer ([Acts 16](#)); a Pharisee (Paul in [Acts 9](#), many others in [15:5](#)); a number of priests ([Acts 6:7](#)) and, of course, a large crowd ([Acts 2](#)).

It seems that for those whom Jesus prayed for forgiveness, there were representative groups in Acts who came to faith, receiving the forgiveness that is found in Jesus Christ. Forgiveness is certainly the way of the kingdom. More specifically, it's the way of evangelism, the way in which the

good news, the gospel, is spread. The church is founded on and propagated by, forgiveness – and not just the forgiveness which Jesus offers, but also that forgiveness which is offered by His followers. In [Acts 7:60](#), Stephen prayed, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” He was praying for the very people who were killing him with rocks.

Forgiveness is not an option. It is, in fact, an essential condition for the Christian faith. It is absolutely necessary, not just for the spiritual benefit of the individual believer but for the very existence of the church itself! 😊