

What Is Forgiveness?

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

Matthew 6:12 (NIV)

We often say that when a person files for bankruptcy the debts they have to various creditors are "forgiven". In other words the bank and loan companies delete the debt from their books and the person's obligation to repay the debts is removed. The bank cannot come after you for any more payments.

In Scripture there are two Greek words used for forgiveness. One appears about 25 times and the other about 150 times. The most common word for forgiveness is used almost exclusively in the Gospels and means to "send away" or "remove".

So we see that in the Bible the matter of forgiveness carries a strong message of removal of whatever blocked the relationship. Nothing negative is between the two people after the forgiveness is given. The offence is forgotten

and the relationship restored.

We also use the term reconciliation in the context of forgiveness. For example in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 (NIV) "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation."

So according to Scripture the message is that when God forgives or "sends away" our sins we appear to God as people who have no sin. The debt we owe God is fully paid by Jesus and we have confidence to come into the presence of God knowing that our sins have been "sent away".

One verse of another great hymn by Charles Wesley

says;

My God is reconciled;
His pardoning voice I hear;
He owns me for His child;
I can no longer fear:
With confidence
I now draw nigh,
And "Father, Abba,
Father," cry.

The same thing applies in human relationships. Forgiveness means that when we forgive someone their sin against us we are to receive them back into the relationship we had with them prior to their offence. We cannot hold their sin against them any longer. This is the teaching of Scripture and I pray that all of my readers have this forgiveness from the God Who created them for His presence in the first place.

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