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Making Forgiveness a Reality

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As the darkness deepens around us, we need spiritual sight more than ever to discern truth and hear God's voice. He calls us to start by humbling ourselves (2 Chronicles 7:14). Last week, I shared three papers called *Beautiful Progressions of Repentance* to help us.

Part of humbling ourselves is walking tangibly in forgiveness. I like to ask Father simple questions, and so in my need to be sure my heart was clear toward the one who sinned against me, I asked, "What is forgiveness? When does the idea of forgiveness become a reality?"

Some of the advice I have heard is "forgiveness is not for the one who sinned against you, but for *you*," and "forgiveness is a choice not a feeling." However, I believe when we forgive, we open the door for the offender to come closer to the light, as well. And if there is a choice involved, it is the choice to lean on the Only One Who is able to forgive *through* us – the Holy Spirit. Then, we experience peace and health in our spirit, mind, emotions, and body; in other words, it *feels* good to forgive. Time may be needed to heal, and the relationship may need to be re-evaluated, but there is peace.

Still, with this understanding, I came to the Scripture again about forgiveness. I wrote in my journal, "Sometimes I think the only way I can forgive is to excuse the sin. For example, I can say I forgive because, 'I feel sorry for her,' or 'He had a difficult childhood,' or 'She's had a hard week,' and so on. But is forgiveness the same as making excuses for hurtful behavior?" Let's look at Scripture:

As Yeshua hung on the cross having been violated more intensely than any of us can imagine, He said, "Father, **forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.**" (Luke 23:34)

Let's look at three of the original Greek words and their meanings, and then find instruction:

1. **Forgive** – *aphiēmi* (af ee' ay mee) – *to send forth or away; to let go from oneself; dismiss; forsake; lay aside.* The Hebrew word *nāsā* also means *lifted or taken away.*
2. **Know** – *eidō* (i' do) – *to see with perception; be aware; perceive to understand.*
3. **Doing** – *poieo* (poy eh' o) – *expressing action as either completed or continued.*

Yeshua's words give us the simple yet powerful instruction for forgiving. Our power to forgive is given to us when we accept His sacrifice for our own sins. We must remember that sin could not be ignored; it had to be dealt with. God reconciled us to Himself in Yeshua by unleashing the judgment onto Him, the spotless Lamb, ... the judgment due to us and the world. God's judgment ran its full course as Yeshua hung on the cross. Not only did He endure excruciating and prolonged physical pain on our behalf, but He endured the weight of all the evil that ever was. We cannot fathom this payment. But this is why we sing Hallelujah (praise Yahweh)! There is now no condemnation to us if we receive this indescribable Gift. O, Hallelujah! Our sins are under His blood!

So, let's look at the Greek-word definitions from the words of Luke 23:34 for instruction:

1. We **forgive** when we let go of the offense. Even if the offender does not ask for forgiveness for their specific sin against us, we separate ourselves from the offense. This requires dependence on the Holy Spirit to remove the offense from our mind, release our grip on the hurt, clear recurring thoughts about the situation, and bring healing.
2. We actually *do* excuse them, because we understand they are blind and unable to **see the situation with proper insight**. Praying for them will release the hold of the offense on us.
3. Whether their sin is **done** once or continues, our forgiveness never ends.

A personalized prayer for us:

Holy Spirit, nudge me to forgive early in every situation. Cleanse my mind, so that no root of bitterness or resentment can grow. Separate my emotions and thoughts from any trauma I experienced. Let joy and gratitude reign in me. I listen to You quietly in Psalm 139:23-24 so that no one has to struggle to forgive me. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts. And see if there is any hurtful way in me and lead me in the everlasting way."