

SABBATH THOUGHT 2026-01-31—FORGIVING OTHERS

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

Forgiveness is very misunderstood. Much of the confusion, I believe, stems from not recognizing that there are two kinds of forgiveness: forgiveness from God and forgiveness among people. The first is a matter of God dealing with sins. Since the Law came from GOD, transgressions are against Him alone:

PSALM 51:4 Against You [God], You only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in Your sight ...

This is why only God can forgive sins¹:

LUKE 5:21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive [G0863 = aphiemi] sins but God alone?”

In Hebrew, *forgive* simply means to pardon, or spare from punishment. But the Greek distinguishes two kinds of forgiveness. When referring to the forgiveness of God, the NT uses the Greek noun *aphiemi* (a-fiy'-ee-miy) meaning *removal* or the verb *aphesis* (a'-fe-sis), which is *to remove* or *to send away*. This reflects the COMPLETE removal sins upon the forgiveness of God²:

ISAIAH 43:25 “I [the LORD], even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.

1 JOHN 1:9 If we confess our sins, He [God] is faithful and just to forgive [G0863 = aphiemi = send away] us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

But forgiveness of God is possible only through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, who shed His blood for the REMISSION of sins:

MATTHEW 26:28 “For this is My [Jesus Christ’s] blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for [or through] the remission [G0859 = aphasis = removal] of sins.

What exactly is REMISSION and how does it relate to forgiveness? *Remission* is from the Greek word *aphesis* but it also translates into *forgiveness*:

COLOSSIANS 1:13-14 He [God] has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness [G0859 = aphasis = removal] of sins.

¹ 2 Sam. 12:13.

² Also Jer. 31:34.

Remission and *forgiveness* are from the same word. The difference is that the blood of Jesus Christ is available for the remission of sin but it is not, of and by itself, applied to sin. The actual removal of sin requires God's forgiveness, which depends upon repentance. In other words, the blood of Jesus Christ does not remove the sin of a person without repentance unto God the Father, who then applies the blood of remission to the sin. But the forgiveness of God, through the blood of Jesus Christ, is complete removal—the sinner, in fact, becomes SINLESS. Various Bibles translate the Greek word *aphesis* as *remission* and *forgiveness*:

HEBREWS 9:22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no **remission [G0859 = aphasis = removal]**.

[TS2009] Hebrews 9:22 And, according to the [law], almost all is cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no **forgiveness [G0859 = aphasis = removal]**.

Remission and forgiveness both mean the complete removal of sin. This is nothing new but it sets the stage for understanding forgiveness among people:

EPHESIANS 4:30-32 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And **be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving [G5483 = charizomai] one another**, even as God in Christ forgave [G5483 = charizomai] you.

Charizomai (a verb) means *to bestow grace upon*. How does one forgive someone by bestowing grace upon them? *Grace* in the Greek is most often translated from the noun *charis*, which is behind the English word *charity*. The forgiveness of God is never from the Greek words *charis* or *charizomai* (charity); it is always the noun *aphiemi* or the verb *aphesis*, meaning removal of sin. While the forgiveness of sin by God is certainly an act of grace³; strictly speaking, His forgiveness is the removal or remission of sin, not charity.

NOTE: Charity is grace (benevolence) from the Greek word *charis* (G5485) whereas love is from the Greek word *agape* (G0026). They are not the same.

However, God requires everyone to at least be willing to forgive others with whom there was a fault, quarrel, or offense. But forgiving someone is an act of charity since only God can forgive sin. Forgiveness from people is not for the removal of sin. After the Corinthian man repented of having relations with his father's wife⁴, Paul told the Corinthians to *forgive* him; that is, offer him *charity*:

2 CORINTHIANS 2:6-11 This punishment which *was inflicted* by the majority is sufficient for such a man, 7 so that, on the contrary, you *ought* rather to **forgive**

³ Eph. 1:7.

⁴ 1 Cor. 5:1.

[G5483 = charizomai] and comfort *him*, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. 8 Therefore I urge you to **reaffirm your love** to him. 9 For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. 10 Now whom you **forgive [G5483 = charizomai]** anything, I also *forgive*. For if indeed I have **forgiven [G5483 = charizomai]** anything, I have **forgiven [G5483 = charizomai]** that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, 11 **lest Satan should take advantage of us**; for we are not ignorant of his devices.

When a person forgives someone, it is an offering of charity. Paul said forgiveness is "**reaffirm[ing] your love**" to someone—it is charity or an offering and affirmation of AGAPE LOVE. But what about scriptures that command us to forgive where the Greek word is the *aphieme*, the removal or remission of sin?

MATTHEW 6:14-15 "For if you **forgive [G0863 = aphiemi = send away]** men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also **forgive [G0863 = aphiemi = send away]** you. 15 "But if you do not **forgive [G0863 = aphiemi = send away]** men their trespasses, neither will your Father **forgive [G0863 = aphiemi = send away]** your trespasses.

Each instance of *forgive* in these verses is *aphiemi*, the *removal* or *remission* of sin. But Jesus was speaking from the perspective of the forgiveness from GOD, not from people. While the forgiveness of God is certainly an act of grace, it is entirely the remission or removal of sin. Again, it is not possible for humans (other than Christ⁵) to forgive sins; therefore, forgiving others is a matter of extending charity to them. What is charity and how does it reaffirm love for someone?

[NET 2.1] COLOSSIANS 3:12-14 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and dearly loved, **clothe yourselves with a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and forgiving [G5483 = charizomai] one another, if someone happens to have a complaint against anyone else.** Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also forgive others.

Charity is having mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience for someone when there are faults, quarrels, or offenses between brethren. Forgiveness by people is charity out of agape love. In all regards, it is GIVING Fruits of the Spirit⁶ to someone. It is a requirement to forgive others because God forgave and removed our sins. What is likely a revelation for many, however, is that God does not require us to forgive an ENEMY:

MATTHEW 5:43-44 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 "But I [*Jesus Christ*] 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 you and persecute you,

⁵ Matt. 9:2-6.

⁶ Refer to the Sabbath Thought on [2025-11-08 Giving the Fruits of the Spirit](#).

Nowhere does the Bible say to forgive an enemy, not even in the context of extending charity. Here, Jesus did not say to *forgive* an enemy but rather to extend to them love, blessings, goodness, and prayers. This is where many people stumble—how does one love, bless, do good, and pray for an enemy?

First of all, who is an enemy? An enemy is someone devoid of agape love—they are, instead, filled with anger, hatred, and malice! An enemy has no agape love; instead, they only desire to say and do evil against others. Often they cloak their evil in LUV (false love) because they are wolves in sheep's clothing:

MATTHEW 7:15-20 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 **“You will know them by their fruits.** Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17 “Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but **a bad tree bears [brings forth—KJV] bad fruit.** 18 “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, **nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.** 19 “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 “Therefore **by their fruits you will know them.**

An enemy is like a bad tree that cannot bear good fruit. The only response, then, is to **“repay no one evil for evil.”**⁷ Why? Because an enemy does not have agape love for others and actually despises agape love from others. Therefore, an enemy do not want forgiveness in the form of charity—love, blessings, goodness, and prayers. They do not want to reconcile. They only want to destroy and usually try to take advantage of someone who shows humility toward them:

MATTHEW 10:16 “Behold, I [*Jesus Christ*] send you out as sheep **in the midst of wolves.** Therefore **be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.**

The first response to an enemy is to “do no harm.” Since enemies will reject and even take advantage of agape love and charity, we show them love when we respond with humility and not anger, we bless them when we wish them well and not evil; and we do good to them when we act virtuously and not with vengeance. Much about extending love, blessings, goodness, and prayers to an enemy is restraining from repaying evil with evil:

LUKE 6:27-30 “But I [*Jesus Christ*] say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 “bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. **29 “To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. 30 “Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back.**

An enemy does not want to reconcile—they want to cause harm. This is why prayers for an enemy are a matter of turning them over to God. Stephen did not offer forgiveness in the form of charity to those who stoned him:

⁷ Rom. 12:17.

ACTS 7:59-60 And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on *God* and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” 60 Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “**Lord, do not charge them with this sin.**” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Stephen also did not ask God to FORGIVE them, he said do not CHARGE them. The TS2009 translation says “**do not hold this sin against them.**” Stephen was essentially telling God that he was willing to die for them, just as Christ died for him. He knew that God would raise them another time and open their hearts and minds to salvation—the same reason Christ *forgave* the sins of those who crucified Him⁸.

So, why not forgive our enemies as Jesus Christ did? Because Jesus was Immanuel (“God with us”) and His sacrifice was for the salvation of the world—all of whom were once enemies of God. So it makes sense that He would forgive them; however, whether or not an enemy is forgiven of sin is God’s decision, not ours. Asking God not to charge or hold a sin against an enemy is the result of agape love but it is NOT forgiveness and, just as in the case of Moses, it is God’s decision alone to forgive someone:

EXODUS 32:32-33 “Yet now, if You [*the LORD*] will forgive their sin—but if not, I [*Moses*] pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.” 33 And the LORD said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.

Stephen understood that his sins were forgiven by God through the blood of Jesus Christ and that His sacrifice was not only for himself but the whole world. Stephen accepted the evil they did to him with tremendous agape love and hope. Dealing with an enemy, is at a minimum, not repaying evil with evil. Many times, it also means not having justice in this life:

1 CORINTHIANS 6:6-7 But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers! 7 Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. **Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated?**

An enemy rejects the ways of agape love and any charity of Fruits of the Spirit. Sometimes love, blessings, goodness, and prayers for an enemy are in the form of not resisting against their evil works and giving them over to God in prayer. But this is also for the perfection of agape love:

MATTHEW 5:44-45, 48 “But I [*Jesus Christ*] 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 you and persecute you, 45 “**that 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. ... 48 “**Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.**”

⁸ Luke 23:34.

The Bible lists three things which are perfection of agape love: 1) giving everything to help the poor⁹, 2) patiently enduring trials¹⁰, and 3) suffering at the hands of an enemy¹¹. But perfection of agape love comes with a great reward:

LUKE 6:35 “But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and **your reward will be great**, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.

Many times, only God can deal with an enemy but through them there is also the perfection of agape love in us. God loves His enemies, blesses them, and does good for them—He makes the sun to shine and rain to fall upon all, which included all who were once His enemies¹²:

COLOSSIANS 1:21 And **you, who once were alienated and enemies** in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled

All the children of God are required to forgive others of a fault, quarrel, or offense by extending charity to them in the form of Fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, and mercy—the very things God extended toward us when He forgave and removed our sins! Enemies cannot respond with agape love but are filled with anger, hatred, and malice. To them we can offer love, blessings, goodness, and prayers but much of it is a matter of not repaying their evil with our own evil and turning them over to God who repaid our own evil with His love, blessings, and goodness¹³. Within the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the great hope of God who is “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Pet. 3:9).

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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⁹ Matt. 19:21.

¹⁰ Heb. 2:10; Jas. 1:2-4.

¹¹ Jas. 3:1-2.

¹² Also John 3:16; Rom. 5:10.

¹³ Rom. 2:4.