

# Biblical Forgiveness - Are There Two Types?

## Summary

This is a **quick summary** of this **study on Biblical forgiveness** - the real solution to guilt. It is intended both as a summary and as a quick read for those that might not have time to read the whole study. I hope, if you read this, you will be encouraged to read the complete study.

A dictionary definition of guilt might be something like: "the fact or state of having done wrong." However, guilt is much more than a fact or state. Feeling is very much involved. Usually, there is a **feeling of estrangement or separation** from the person that we have done the wrong towards. We feel as though we are out of favor with them and we suppose that they must feel angry towards us. There are often feelings of shame as well. **Shame is different than guilt.**

Think about your own experiences with guilt and forgiveness and you will realize that, indeed, **forgiveness is a two-party transaction**. There are always two individuals involved. With God, we just tend to think that we ask for forgiveness and, if God feels like it, He forgives us and only then has forgiveness happened. The process is just a little more involved than that but it is a beautiful truth that will give you a much better understanding of guilt, will **make you feel a lot better** about the process and will help you considerably in dealing with your feelings of guilt.

Our translations from original languages sometimes do not retain all of the original meaning. That has happened here. There is a Greek word - **charizomai** - that refers to forgiveness as felt by the forgiver - the one doing the forgiving. On the other side of the two-party transaction, there are two Greek words - **apheimi and apoluo** - that describe what is happening in the person being forgiven. If you go through the complete study which sorts out the use of the words, you will have a much better understanding of how it works. You will understand the deficiency of the standard definition of guilt.

God loves everyone He has created far more than we can imagine. He always forgives every sin in the sense that He does not hold our sins against us. He is not angry with us. He does not love and care for us any less. **Charizomai** (often translated forgiveness) is the original Greek word that describes His feelings of forgiveness toward us.

Whether you feel it or not, whether you even know it or not, God forgives you. You don't have to earn that from God, just accept it. When you realize His love and acceptance then you will feel forgiven in your heart. That - what happens at your end of the forgiveness process, in your heart - is described by the words **apheimi and apoluo**. Remember, a child does not have to earn the love of his parents - it is freely given.

Jesus, who always said and did what was consistent with His Father's character (see: [www.jesus-resurrection.info/gods-character.html](http://www.jesus-resurrection.info/gods-character.html)), said as He was being crucified "Father forgive (apheimi)

them." He wasn't asking His Father to feel like forgiving them (charizomai). Rather, He was asking that the soldiers mistreating Him could be lead to feel forgiven.

Of course, there is another aspect to forgiveness - the legal one - that involves our acceptance of the payment for the penalty of our sins. This is often described in terms such as **to blot out sins** (see: [www.jesus-resurrection.info/blot-out.html](http://www.jesus-resurrection.info/blot-out.html)). But when we have a better understanding of God's love and His accepting attitude towards us it makes it easy to also accept Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf so that **our sins are covered** in a legal sense and we then have the free gift of salvation and a title to heaven as well as a clear conscience and freedom from guilt.

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Here is the full study:

## **Biblical Forgiveness - Are There Two Types?**

### **Part 1. Introduction**

Are you seeking for Biblical forgiveness? Have you ever struggled with whether or not God has forgiven you? In your relationship to God - do you feel forgiven? Or do you feel guilty? Do you know what the effects of guilt feelings are on emotional health? - they are not good. Health and forgiveness are definitely related. Guilt produces emotional pain and can even result in physical disease. If you are struggling with how to overcome guilt, then forgiveness is something you need to understand. It is something to seek after. But do we really understand what forgiveness is and how to get it?



How do you think that God regards you when you sin? Is He upset? Does He have to be appeased? Reconciled? Do you beg God to forgive you? Do you ever wonder if He does forgive you? There is, in the world, and, to a degree, even in Christianity, confusion over this topic.

### **It Takes Two for Forgiveness to Happen**

First, let's understand that forgiveness is a transaction between two parties. In forgiveness, there is the **forgiver**, the one who offers, who gives the pardon and there is the **forgivee**, the one who accepts and receives the pardon. It isn't just God forgiving us but it is Him forgiving us and us receiving forgiveness. Let's try understanding forgiveness by looking at various scriptures on forgiveness. Scriptures that describe forgiveness from the perspective of both the forgiver and the forgivee. What does the Bible say about it?

## Part 2. The Definition for Forgiveness

To better understand the definition for forgiveness, let's examine what is happening on the side of each party involved in the forgiveness transaction and see what the Bible says about it and how the original words translated into "forgiveness" are involved. I'll share a few forgiveness quotes to illustrate the confusion then we will do a word study and, I hope that, especially if you are dealing with guilt, you will be able to better understand the Biblical definition for forgiveness.

First, consider these verses:

"But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments, And refused to obey ... but thou art a God ready to pardon ..." (Neh 9:16-17)

In this passage, has God's forgiveness already been given to them? No, He is "**ready to pardon**" - like He is about to do it. That means, at the point of writing, He hadn't done it yet. Perhaps He was waiting for them to do something.

What is commonly understood to happen before God administers forgiveness? - repentance, confession. Then God's forgiveness will be granted; He will pardon and bless.

Maybe this doesn't match your definition of the forgiveness process, - or maybe it does - but what is the common understanding of most people of God's attitude towards us before we repent and confess, before He has forgiven us? - something like that He is angry or upset with us. And, after we repent, what is the attitude of God (in the common understanding) towards us after we repent? - He is happy with us, favorable towards us, ready to bless us. He is ready to pardon, we repent and 'fess up and then He is ready to follow that with being ready to bless us. Is that really how it is? Does that correspond to your understanding of and definition for forgiveness? Consider this verse:

"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Rom 2:4)

Which comes first according to this verse, the goodness of God or something on our part? - the goodness of God. If the goodness of God leads us to repentance then the goodness of God has to come first.

It's the goodness of God then confession and repentance.

Now look at 1 John 1:9:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

Which comes first according to this verse; our confession or His forgiveness? - our confession. This verse seems to put a clear precondition on forgiveness. When we have confessed our sins, then and only then do we receive forgiveness. It seems that God is holding something back from us until we meet a condition. It is confession first, then forgiveness.

confession then forgiveness

Couldn't this be confusing? First, it sounds like God is ready to forgive once we repent and confess. Second, we have the goodness of God first that leads us to confess and repent. Third, we have if we confess then He will forgive. "If" sounds like a precondition to me. Then we have a couple of verses that go back to the other way:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

For sure, He gave His Son before I came along and needed forgiveness.

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom 5:8)

These verses suggest that God loved the world before He gave His son to die for it which suggests no precondition.

So which is it? Does He love us but not forgive us? Does He forgive us only as we meet conditions? And if He has not forgiven us what is His attitude toward us? Does God's attitude toward us change when we sin? Do we need to pray earnestly so that God will change His attitude towards us; so that He will no longer, ignore, reject or punish us and so He will forgive us?

In looking at just a few scriptures to help come up with a definition for forgiveness we have seen seemingly contradictory statements that could be used in a definition of forgiveness. These verses have caused debate and misunderstanding. We know that the word of God does not really contradict itself so let's take a look at some of these apparent contradictions, explore the meaning of forgiveness and see if we can understand this topic better. The benefits may be not only a better understanding of the subject but also a clearer conscience and a better appreciation of the plan of God and of His great love for us.

The Bible actually talks about two related-but-different events or processes when using the word forgiveness. We will see that forgiveness in the Bible is actually translated from several different original Hebrew and Greek words with different meanings. We get confused because we have only one English word that does not cover the shades of meaning in the original languages. As we study into forgiveness we find that there is good news. When all is understood in the definition for forgiveness it is a great help in dealing with guilt and it is good news indeed.

### Part 3. Bible Verses on Forgiveness (Showing How it is Normally Understood)

Carefully examining Bible verses on forgiveness can help us to understand the meanings of the different words translated as forgiveness both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. We will look at several Bible verses on forgiveness and at some examples of how they are used. Because it is a two-party transaction as I have already mentioned, we will look at forgiveness one side at a time.

First, we will consider forgiveness as it applies to the forgivee, the one who is forgiven. The first word we want to look at is the Hebrew word "**nasaw**" (Strong's number 05375). It is used in the sense of to bear as in a load; to lift up; to take away. Here is the usage and shades of meaning as given by the Online Bible ([www.onlinebible.net](http://www.onlinebible.net))

Heb - Nasaw 05375 AV-(bare, lift, etc...) up 219, bear 115, take 58, bare 34, carry 30, (take, carry)..away 22, borne 22, armourbearer 18, forgive 16, accept 12, exalt 8, regard 5, obtained 4, respect 3, misc 74; 654

- \* to lift, bear up, carry, take
- \* to lift, lift up,
- \* to bear, carry, support, sustain, endure
- \* to take, take away, carry off, forgive
- \* to cause one to bear (iniquity)
- \* to cause to bring, have brought

Let's look at some examples of the use of the word nasaw:

"Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin." (Psa 85:2)

This seems to have the meaning that we normally associate with Bible verses on forgiveness. God has taken away the sin of the people so they don't have to bear it. Let's look at another example:

"And if a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD; though he wist *it* not, yet is he guilty, and shall **bear** <5375> his iniquity." (Lev 5:17)

Here nasaw is translated "bear" as in to carry a load, bear a burden. What the sinner is really bearing is the result of his iniquity which could include the guilt, the shame and the natural consequences of the sin; a burden that can be largely lifted by forgiveness.

"Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins." (Psa 25:18)

In this verse, the removal of affliction and pain is associated with the forgiveness of sins. What sort of affliction and pain is this talking about? I think it would be mainly a hurting conscience. Although, if we could really know how it works, we would find that there is a considerable connection between sin and a guilty conscience on one hand and physical disease on the other.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven , whose sin is covered." (Psa 32:1)

The result of "nasaw" forgiveness is that the one forgiven is blessed or happy. There is a good result to the forgivee. These uses include the concept of taking something away from the forgivee. The next Hebrew word is **calach**:

Heb - Calach 05545 AV-forgive 19, forgiven 13, pardon 13, spare 1; 46

Meaning:

to forgive, pardon

to be forgiven

Let's see how "calach" is used in Bible verses on forgiveness:

"Who **forgiveth** all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases" (Psa 103:3)

From this verse, all we learn is that it is God who does the forgiving. He is the forgiver. And, interestingly, in that verse, there is that connection between being forgiven and healing.

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." <5545> (Isa 55:7)

This verse is like one of the Bible verses on forgiveness that we looked at earlier. It is saying that man first forsakes his way and returns to God, then God will pardon or forgive.

"It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may **forgive** <5545> their iniquity and their sin." (Jer 36:3)

Again, people return from their evil way and, as a result of that, they are forgiven. (Sounds like something out of the book of Jonah, where this happened to the whole city of Ninevah)

"We have transgressed and have rebelled: thou hast not **pardoned**. <5545>" (Lam 3:42)

In this case, since they have transgressed or sinned and have rebelled rather than repented, God has not pardoned. These two words, nasaw and calach, both have the meaning of to take something away. When you receive forgiveness, what is taken away from you? - guilt, shame, debt. Can you see that these words are describing what is happening on the side of the forgivee?

Then we also have two similar New Testament words that are used in Bible verses on forgiveness. The first is **aphiemi**

Greek - aphiemi 863 (to send, to go) AV-leave 52, forgive 47, suffer 14, let 8, forsake 6, let alone 6, misc 13; 146

Meaning:

\* to send away [the guilt]

\* to permit, allow, not to hinder, to give up a thing to a person \* to leave, go away from one

Here is an example of the use of that word:

"And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be **forgiven** <863> thee." (Matt 9:2)

Who is the change taking place in, in this case? Is it a change in God or in the sick man? What would be taken away from this man? Remember it is the word *aphiemi* - shame, guilt etc.

The second Greek word, **apoluo** <630> means much the same, along the lines of to set free, to release.

"And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go <630>;" (Luke 14:4)

These two Hebrew and two Greek words are all referring to the work God accomplishes in the heart or mind of the believer through the merits of the death of Jesus. This forgiveness deals with the "canceling out" of sins consequences. The Bible verses on forgiveness that we have looked at in this part have described forgiveness from the viewpoint of the forgivee, the one who is forgiven. In the next part, we will examine further Bible verses on forgiveness where we will consider the viewpoint of the forgiver.

#### **Part 4. Forgiveness in the Scriptures** (Showing the Other Definition of Forgiveness)

What is happening in the heart of God? What we have considered so far is forgiveness as it applies to the forgivee, the one who is forgiven. Now let's look at the other half of this two-party transaction, at what is happening on the part of the forgiver. Remember, we are the forgivees, God is the forgiver. Let's examine what takes place in God's heart, on the level of His emotions; at how God "feels" toward us as sinners.

Consider again:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

We see that the gift of God's Son to die for us was **preceded by a love that already existed in God's heart** toward sinners. This forgiveness did not emanate from the cross - it was already there before Jesus' sacrifice. Had it not been for God's preexisting love for us, the events of the cross would never have taken place. It was because of God's love for the world that He gave us

His only Son. This is a vital point because many believe that God would have retained malice in His heart continually toward man if it weren't for the cross. Many teach that, through the cross, God was appeased of His enmity, His hard feelings toward man. The cross, however, did not bring about a change in God's emotional response toward us; rather, it manifested or displayed God's heartfelt sentiments for man that He had held long before the events of the cross took place. Notice another passage that speaks of God's intrinsic forgiveness:

"In whatever our heart condemns us; ... God is greater than our heart, and knows all things" (1 John 3:20, New American Standard)

We have all experienced that nagging feeling deep inside after we've done something we know to be wrong, have we not? The apostle John reminds us that when we are conscience stricken and wrestling under a weight of guilt, we are not to think the condemnation comes from God. God is greater than the heart. Although our hearts, our consciences, do condemn us, His spirit of forgiveness and love is already working to win us back from sin's consequences. Here is another version:

"By genuinely loving our brother we may know that we are children of the truth, or of God. This knowledge will enable us to stand confidently in the presence of God, for even though our heart condemns us, since we are still sinners, we know that God is greater than our heart, His knowledge and understanding far surpass our own, and He is able to perceive our sincerity and to allow for the mistakes into which we fall." (1 John 3:19-20, paraphrased, SDA Bible Commentary)

He allows for our mistakes in that He has made provision for it. Long ago, I learned a little trick that has helped me through life. Maybe you've learned this as well. The trick, the lesson is to not beat yourself up emotionally when you do something wrong, make a bad decision, really mess up big time. We are human, we will make mistakes. And mistakes are not good, you may have to suffer some consequences. But admit that you are not perfect, make it right in whatever way you need to and get on with your life. I believe that God wants us to do that. He doesn't want us carrying burdens around. He has forgiven us; He wants us to forgive ourselves.

Let's look at the story in John chapter 8 of the woman taken in adultery. Jesus, after saying to her accusers "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," wrote with His finger in the sand. It is understood by many that what He was writing was something to reveal the sins of the accusers. After her accusers had crept away, Jesus asked her:

"Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." (John 8:10-11)

Jesus, the revealer of the character of God to mankind, showed us, through His encounter with an adulteress and her accusers, that God's attitude toward sinners is one of simple and complete love and forgiveness. We may not "feel" that He is relating to us that way, but faith is not "feeling." Our job is to believe that God loves us and has forgiven us in spite of our sin, no matter how dark that sin may be. This must be our belief about God, whether we "feel" it is true or not. Believing



in God's changeless love in direct opposition to our feelings is the battle against self. This is the fight of faith.

Had this woman confessed her sins yet? - no  
Did she know Jesus was the Saviour? - no  
Had she prayed the sinner's prayer? - no

The forgiveness in God's heart not only preceded the cross, it also preceded any response of faith and repentance on our part. This type of forgiveness refers to what God "feels" towards sinners. God's goodness is what leads us to repentance. It is there before any response we make to Him.

So, is there a word translated as "forgiveness" that describes forgiveness on the part of God the forgiver? Yes, that word is charizomai (Strong's #5483)

AV-forgive 11, give 6, freely give 2, deliver 2, grant 1, frankly forgive 1; 23  
\* to do something pleasant or agreeable (to one), to do a favour to, gratify  
\* to show one's self gracious, kind, benevolent  
\* to grant forgiveness, to pardon  
\* to give graciously, give freely, bestow

Let's look at some verses using charizomai:

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven <5483> you all trespasses" (Col 2:13)

God has charizomied you. When? - when you were dead in your sins. Was that before confession on your part? - yes

Where has that forgiveness, that charizomai, taken place; in who's heart? - God's. Charizomai happens in God's heart

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven <5483> you." (Eph 4:32)

Has God already forgiven you, according to this verse? - yes

"So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive <5483> him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." (2 Cor 2:7)

If you forgive someone, that forgiveness is taking place in your heart, right? Whether or not it affects the heart of the one being forgiven, it has to happen in your heart. Can you comfort someone who you are still steaming mad at? No, you have to have charizomai first. You have to have forgiveness in your heart.

Here is a little test to see if you understand the distinction. Look at this passage:

"To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;" (2 Cor 2:10)

The second "forgive" is supplied but it is supplied because it is clearly implied and it must be the same form of forgiveness because it says "I forgive also."

"To whom ye forgive anything." The question is which "forgive" is this - is it charizomai or aphiemi/apoluo? - charizomai

Is it forgiveness happening in the heart of the forgiver or the forgivee? - the forgiver.

Why? You would likely answer: because it says "ye forgive" But there is another reason. There are many verses that mention forgiveness from God where it is referring to what happens in the heart of the forgivee.

If you forgive a forgivee (a sinner) and that forgiveness is aphiemi/apoluo then what has happened in the forgivee? - the guilt and shame is removed. Then can Paul, who is speaking here, or anyone else come along and remove guilt and shame? - no, it is already gone. You can't remove something that is not there.

## **Part 5. More Bible Quotes on Forgiveness** To Illustrate How Sin and Forgiveness are Related

Let's read more quotes on forgiveness to see how these two aspects of forgiveness work together. You might want to turn to the passages in your own Bible.

Colossians 2:13-14 (see the study on Colossians 2 at [www.jesus-resurrection.info/colossians-2.html](http://www.jesus-resurrection.info/colossians-2.html)) has lots to say about forgiveness, but for the moment disregard the word "forgiven."

"And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven <5483, charizomai> us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Col 2:13-14, NAS)

We need to ask some questions here:

1. What is this "certificate of debt" that He canceled out and nailed to His cross?
2. Where was it taken from?
3. From whom, out of whose way did He take it?

### **1. What is the Certificate of Debt?**

In the King James Version, Colossians 2:14 speaks of Christ "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us." The Greek word there for "handwriting" is cheirographon (khi-rog'-raf-on), which was a handwritten document that functioned as a promissory note. This was not referring to the law itself, but to a record of charges that stood against an individual, a record of their indebtedness. Therefore, this canceling the debt is referring to God's act of taking our debt of sin and blotting it out.

## 2. Where Was It Taken From?

Specifically, where was it taken from? The prophet Jeremiah gives us a clue:

"The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; with the point of a diamond it is engraved on the tablet of their heart?" (Jer 17:1, NKJV)

What is the Bible referring to by saying we have a record of sin in our heart? Simply, that we have a conscience that plagues us with guilt and condemnation, when we understand our actions and behaviors to be inconsistent with what is right. The forgiveness, on our part, involves the canceling out of the record of our indebtedness, removing it from our consciences, "setting us free" from our inner guilt! God accomplished this miraculous change in us through our faith in the death of His Son. This was God's motive in giving Jesus to the world. Christ's death was not intended to appease any inborn malice in God's heart, not to get Him to forgive, but rather to liberate us from sin's psychological consequences, to enable us to experience forgiveness. The following passage discusses this:

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb 9:14, NKJV)

The blood of Christ cleanses our consciences from the guilt of our "dead works," works that lead to death. We are no longer bothered by a guilty conscience. The guilt and shame is gone. It changes us, not Him!

"Without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb 9:22)

The word "remission" does not refer to the forgiveness that occurs in God's heart. We have already noted that God forgave us in His great heart before any blood was shed. Had God not already forgiven us, no blood would have ever been shed. "Remission" here is a form of the word *aphiemi* and is talking about the sinner's psychological freedom from the guilt of sin. The same word is used in this verse:

"John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4, NKJV)

Baptism is not about water cleansing the surface of the skin. The work of baptism goes deep, through our identification with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, to the work of cleansing our conscience. Baptism is to identify with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus ?

that's why Bible baptism is in the form of immersion. You go right under the water in a burial and are resurrected out of the water.

"And baptism, of which this (Noah's flood) is an image, now gives you salvation, not by washing clean the flesh, but by making you free from the sense of sin before God, through the coming again of Jesus Christ from the dead;" (1 Pet 3:21, Bible in Basic English)

### **3. From Whom, Out of Whose Way Did He Take It?**

By doing this grand work in us, Jesus took our indebtedness "out of the way." Out of whose way? Consider a scenario: Have you ever owed someone something and couldn't pay it back? Did it get in the way of your relationship with them? When you saw them, did you intentionally turn the other way or, at least, avoid the topic of the debt? Without the cross, our indebtedness would have prevented us from ever drawing close to the Father. Not because the Father would have held our debt over us or turned the other way, but because our enormous guilt would have loomed before us whenever we encountered Him. Our debt would still be in our way. We could never have come near to Him because of the guilt of our indebtedness to Him. Jesus died to save us. He was crucified for us. It was for our redemption that He took our certificate of debt and nailed it to His cross so that it could be taken away from us.

So God took the certificate of our debt out of our way by putting it on Jesus and permitting Him to suffer the consequences instead of us. Why did He do this? Because, already in His heart, on an emotional level He had already forgiven, - charazomied - us.

"When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Col 2:13-14, NASB)

So the word "forgiven" in Col 2:13 is? - charizomai. The apostle John also talks about forgiveness in this well-known verse:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

Here again, John is not talking about the forgiveness that takes place within God's heart. We are not to think that God's heart is closed toward sinners until they confess. Many believe and teach this unjust charge against God. He does not hold man at arm's length until we take the first step toward reconciliation. God freely forgave us from the tenderness of His heart long before we had even the first thought of confessing anything. This verse is referring to the work of the canceling out of our indebtedness, our sin and unrighteousness; it happens in us, not in Him.

Take note of what the verse itself is saying: "to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This forgiveness centers, once again, on the cleansing work that God is doing in us. It's a matter of

whether we will see our need to have the guilt and shame removed and then allow God to do it for us. It is happening in our minds and God will not interfere with that unless we allow Him.

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."  
(Matt 6:14-15)

Forgive here is *aphiemi*, not *charizomai*. If we *aphiemi* others, where is that forgiveness happening? Remember, when we forgive others it is also a two-party process. This verse is not referring to a change happening in us. How do we know? - Because "*aphiemi*" describes the state of the forgivee. We may have a part in it but the actual word *aphiemi* is referring to forgiveness as they receive it. How do we know this is referring to the removal of guilt and shame from them? - "*aphiemi*."

If we don't *aphiemi* others, does God forgive us? Yes, He forgives, He "*charizomais*" us but we will not be "*aphiemied*." Why not? Because how can we feel free of guilt and shame in our hearts when we are not willing to do what we should and need to for others to experience that freedom when they have wronged us?

Can you see the deeper meaning that comes from having more than one word for forgiveness?

## **Part 6. A Prayer for Forgiveness of Sins - A Prayer That We Will Receive, Not that God Will Grant**

By now, I hope you can understand what a prayer for forgiveness of sins is really a prayer for. Among some that seek forgiveness, an understanding or definition of guilt is that God has not forgiven them. In their thinking, there has to be a change in the heart of God towards them and then the forgiveness can happen. Such thinking on our part should never keep us from asking for forgiveness.

I hope this study is increasing your understanding of what is involved in forgiveness. Misunderstanding of Biblical forgiveness is one of the greatest reasons why people stay away from God. Maybe you have felt that you were "not good enough" or that you needed to "get your act together" for God to accept you. Understand that forgiveness is a two-party transaction. On His side, He has already forgiven you in His heart. He does not need to change His attitude towards you. He has always loved you and has provided the means to remove the guilt and shame from you - so you can feel forgiven - long before you were even born.

On your side, understand that your feeling forgiven does not come from a change in God's attitude towards you, it comes from you realizing that He has forgiven you and doing what you need to do to remove the guilt and shame. That confessing our sins includes realizing we are involved in sin and turning from it, forsaking it. When we are no longer involved in it there is no reason for guilt and shame - the sin that causes it is gone. Guilt and shame are natural

consequences of our actions. Stop the action that caused guilt and shame and the guilt and shame stops. Is that simple enough?

God does not change. God is love. Therefore, everything He does has to be consistent with what He is. He treats us in a different way because we have changed course. The change in His actions is because He does not change. He is love and always will be love. He always does the loving thing - but the loving thing may change as the circumstances change. He always loves us and puts us before Himself. He always forgives us, charizomais us. But if we will not allow Him to take away the guilt and shame, to aphiemi/apoluo us then forgiveness doesn't happen to us. But in His heart He still loves us and forgives us and ultimately will do the most loving thing He can for those who do not accept forgiveness. Ultimately, He mercifully allows unrepentant sinners to die the second death.

### **Two-party Transaction Expanded**

I mentioned at the start that forgiveness is a two-party transaction, the two being the forgiver and the forgivee. I would like to clarify that a little. While there are two sides involved, the two processes are a little more independent of each other than you might understand.

What do you expect to happen in answer to a prayer for forgiveness of sins? We need to realize that God, in His heart, forgives us, has already forgiven us whether we accept it or not, whether we want it or not, even whether we know it or not. His forgiveness, His charizomai does not depend upon our being good enough, does not depend on our repentance or confession or even upon us feeling like we are a lousy sinners. He continues to love us, to offer us His blessing, even to bless us. He desperately wants you to be saved eternally and today to turn to Him, to open your understanding and realize the depth of His acceptance and love for you.

So, in your prayers when you are asking for forgiveness, now that you understand forgiveness, pray intelligently. Don't pray for God to charizomai you because He already has. People will pray "Please, please God, please forgive me." They beg and plead and promise "Dear God if you'll just forgive me I won't do it again." And they are thinking of and looking for a change in God. "God, please will you forgive me?" Don't do that - He already has forgiven you. Don't plead for charizomai to happen, it has happened long ago.

Your other choice when praying for forgiveness is to pray that God will aphiemi or apoluo you. That He will take away the guilt and shame from your heart. But what has to happen for that to happen? - You need to stop doing the sin or you need to make it right with God or whoever is involved. The guilt and shame is a consequence of your wrong actions. So quit the actions!

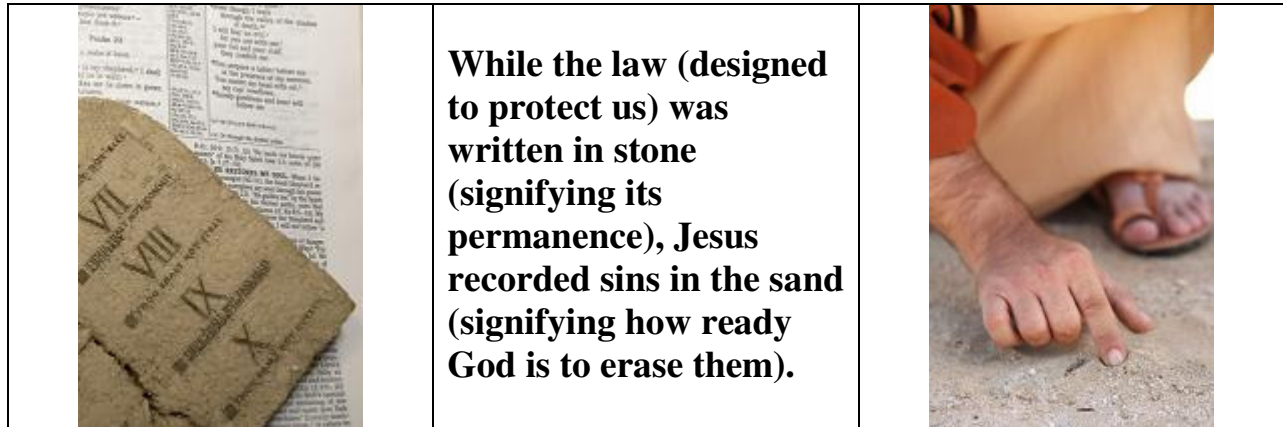
I want to end this study with this verse - it is the first one we started with:

"but thou art a God ready to pardon, ..." (Neh 9:17)

Pardon, of course is the same as forgiveness. Now a final test:

What is He ready to do; stop being mad at you? - no.  
Forgive you in His heart? - no, He has already done that.  
He is ready to take away the shame and guilt the moment you will let Him.

The word "pardon" here is a variation of the Hebrew word "calach" which is equivalent to the Greek "apheimi." I think if you will really try to understand how this works, what has already happened on God's side, in His heart toward you - **charizomai forgiveness** - you will be greatly encouraged to go forward, and, with His help, to deal with things in your life so that you will truly experience **apheimi forgiveness** in your own heart.



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- Ray Foucher