

Debts and Debtors

As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.—Psalm 103:11–121

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If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.—Psalm 130:3,42

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I know what it's like to be wrongfully hurt. I know abuse. I know suffering. You know the story of My life on earth. You know what men did to Me, at the instigation of evil men. You've read the Bible. Most of you have seen the movies and gotten a good idea of the extreme agony and torture I endured. You've thought and meditated on the sacrifice I made in dying for you. My example of forgiving those who tortured and killed Me, of the pardon I granted them, is often referred to. But think about it for a minute; meditate on it, and on what it means to you.

You know that I came to earth to save you, to take your sins on Myself, to redeem you so that you could be reunited with Me and My Father, to die so that you might have eternal life. My coming to earth, My suffering for you, My atonement for your sins was the ultimate act of forgiveness. My act of suffering and dying in your place was a choice made out of love—love for each individual that makes up humanity.

That love was not limited or selective. That love was for all. That love even included a love for those who tortured and executed Me, and a love for those who loved Me but fled in My hour of need. I forgave them all. And throughout history, I have accepted and forgiven anyone who has come to Me to receive My salvation.

Forgiveness, while not easy, is simple. Salvation and forgiveness are both a part of My divine nature, and a part of My nature that you can share in. When you accept salvation, you accept My love, and you accept My forgiveness; and you also receive divine power to help you to love and forgive others.—Jesus, speaking in prophecy³

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“Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”—Isaiah 1:18

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Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.—Matthew 6:12, 14, 15

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Then came Peter to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”—Matthew 18:21–22

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Resentment comes from two Latin words meaning “to feel again.” When we resent, we allow the negative emotions we feel at the time of a hurt—a disappointment, a betrayal—to recur long after the event is over, flooding our systems with their poisons over and over again. Because of its effect on the human mind and body, it does not matter how “justified” the resentment is. In my 27 years as a practicing psychiatrist—and in the 15 years before that when I was a medical doctor—I have come to regard resentment as a cancer of the personality that is as deadly as any physical growth.—James A. Stringham

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One of the secrets of a long and fruitful life is to forgive everybody, everything, every night before you go to bed.—Bernard M. Baruch

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My idea of forgiveness is letting go of resentment ... ridding yourself of negative thoughts. All they do is make you miserable. Believe me, you can fret and fume all you want, but whoever it was that wronged you is not suffering from your anguish whatsoever.—Della Reese

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When we bring our sins to Jesus, He not only forgives them, He makes them as if they had never been.—Corrie ten Boom

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Forgiveness is the act that helps another's wrong to not become your wrong as well.

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A person who has an unforgiving spirit is always the real loser, much more so than the one against whom the grudge is held. Unforgiveness, by its very nature, prevents individuals from following through on many of the specifics of the Christian life and practically necessitates that they walk by the flesh rather than by the spirit. ...

By refusing to forgive and by waiting for restitution to be made, individuals allow their personal growth and development to hinge on the decision of others they dislike to begin with. They allow themselves to be held hostage. They say, "If he apologizes." "If she comes back to me." "If he rehires me." "If they invite me." They play the game of waiting for others to make the first move. In the meantime they allow an unforgiving spirit to weave its way into the total fabric of their lives.—Charles Stanley⁷

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Holding on to hurt is like grabbing a rattlesnake by the tail: You are going to be bitten.—Charles Stanley⁸

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We must view those we have forgiven as tools in our lives to aid us in our growth in and understanding of the grace of God. Joseph of old certainly understood this principle. After all his brothers did to him, he was able to forgive them. He saw them as the instruments of God to get him to Egypt and to be in such a position of power that he could save his family when famine destroyed all the crops.—Charles Stanley⁹

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Remember that forgiveness is for our benefit. The other person's behavior may never change. It is up to God, not us, to change that person.—Charles Stanley¹⁰

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Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.—
Ephesians 4:32

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Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.—1 Peter 4:8

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Love lets the past die. It moves people to a new beginning without settling the past. Love does not have to clear up all past misunderstandings. The details of the past become irrelevant; only its new beginning matters. Accounts may go unsettled; differences remain unsolved; ledgers stay unbalanced. Conflicts between people's memories of how things happened are not cleared up; the past stays muddled. Only the future matters. Love's power does not make fussy historians. Love prefers to tuck the loose ends of past rights and wrongs in the bosom of forgiveness—and pushes us into a new start.—Lewis B. Smedes¹³

1 KJV.

2 NIV.

3 Originally published in 2008.

4 NIV.

5 ESV.

6 NIV.

7 *The Gift of Forgiveness* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002).

8 *The Gift of Forgiveness* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002).

9 The Gift of Forgiveness (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002).

10 The Gift of Forgiveness (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002).

11 NKJV.

12 NIV.

13 Love Within Limits (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989).