



Forgiveness



FORGIVENESS

EVERETT L. WORTHINGTON, JR.

(2 Corinthians 2:5-11)

he concept of forgiveness is as slippery as a greased watermelon in a swimming pool. The harder you squeeze it, the more slippery it becomes. People use the term "forgiveness" loosely and mean different things.

First, what is *unforgiveness*? Unforgiveness is a set of delayed emotions that consists of resentment, bitterness, hatred, hostility, anger, and fear. These emotions arise in a person because of a transgression that has wounded them psychologically or physically. Unforgiveness consumes the heart like a cancer. The wounded person responds with hot emotions of anger, and fear of being wounded again. The emotions of anger and fear are not unforgiveness. But when these emotions are continually replayed mentally, the resulting delayed emotions are unforgiveness.

So what is *forgiveness*? People think of forgiveness as what we do to get rid of unforgiveness. But forgiveness is more than relinquishing judgment to God or simply accepting the hurt and letting it pass. True forgiveness occurs when those cold emotions of unforgiveness are changed to warm, loving, compassionate, caring, altruistic emotions resulting from a heartfelt transformation. Forgiveness is both an act and a process. It could be compared to canceling a debt. Forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation. It takes two to reconcile; it takes only one to forgive.

God's forgiveness of humans and our forgiveness of one another are different, although related. Both involve an altruistic, emotional response by the forgiver toward another who *needs* forgiveness. But there's a difference in the one doing the forgiving. Whereas God has an infinite perspective on us, we do not have that same perspective on others. God knows our hearts and motives, so He can legitimately

demand our repentance prior to forgiving. Humans, however, cannot demand repentance before granting forgiveness.

THE EXAMPLE IN MATTHEW 18

Matthew 18 gives clear teaching about forgiveness. Jesus described divine forgiveness and love in the parable of the lost sheep. He encouraged reconciliation and said that forgiveness should be unlimited. He then told the parable of the unforgiving servant, tying together God's forgiveness of us with our forgiveness of others (Matt. 18:21-35).

Forgiveness is often thought of as a Christian duty. Forgiveness can rarely be achieved when practiced as a duty, however. The positive, loving emotions of forgiveness that replace the delayed emotions of unforgiveness rarely flow from willful duty. Instead, they flow from a heart that is transformed by having experienced God's love and forgiveness (Eph. 4:31, 32).

HOW TO FORGIVE

There are many ways to forgive a person who has harmed us, any one of which can be effective. In soul care, we should attempt to help people experience *empathy* for the person who harmed them, *humility* about their own sinfulness, and *gratitude* over having themselves been forgiven by God and by others.

Helping people experience forgiving emotions is not easy and requires time. I use a five-step acrostic to help people experience forgiveness, which I call the Pyramid Model to REACH forgiveness:

R = Reconcile
deny that
However,
whiny vic
blame. Ins
calmly an
what happ
E = Empa
you. Empa
stand wh
been going
feel with
A = Give
Try to re
someone
ber specif
you receiv
you can m
ing that
C = Co
truly forg
doubt the
cident an
emotions
down you
ed friend
follow-up
you, you
H = Hol
doubt wh
you can
member
tween
experie
For
forgiveness
person
and forg
or reques
must not
gently.
The
count. A
or confes
followed
of an in

To Learn
also the pe

R = Recall the hurt. To heal, you must not deny that you have been hurt or offended. However, you should not recall the hurt in whiny victimization or as finger-pointing blame. Instead, you should recall the hurt calmly and try to remember objectively what happened.

E = Empathize with the person who hurt you. Empathy means attempting to understand what the transgressor might have been going through. It helps to attempt to feel with the person who caused the hurt.

A = Give an Altruistic gift of forgiveness. Try to recall a time when you harmed someone who later forgave you. Remember specifically what happened and how you received the offer of forgiveness. Then you can more easily envision yourself giving that gift back to another.

C = Commit publicly to forgive. You can truly forgive in your heart, but you might doubt that forgiveness if you recall the incident and re-experience some of the hot emotions. By speaking aloud or writing down your forgiveness, by telling a trusted friend, or, in some cases, by writing a follow-up letter to the person who harmed you, you can solidify the act of forgiveness.

H = Hold on to forgiveness. When you doubt whether the forgiveness was real, you can hold onto the forgiveness by remembering that there is a difference between remembering the event and experiencing the cold emotions.

For help in experiencing and granting forgiveness, we might need to talk with the person who hurt us about the transgression and forgiveness. We must make a *reproach*, or request for an explanation. A reproach must not be made harshly, however, but gently.

The transgressor responds with an *account*. Accounts can be denials, excuses, or confessions. A confession should be followed by a sincere apology, statement of an intent not to transgress in the same

way again, an offer of restitution, and a request for forgiveness.

We must decide whether we can experience the emotions that lead to the changed heart of forgiveness. Forgiving cannot be summoned at will; therefore, often when we are asked to forgive, it will take time to experience the new emotions.

Talking about forgiveness is often a major step on the way to reconciliation between two parties who have had a trust broken. Parties must decide whether they can reconcile and if so, how to work this process. For reconciliation to be complete, however, both parties need to reverse the damage that was done in the relationship, decide to give each other mercy at an occasional failure, and take active steps to build love in their relationship by valuing each other.

FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of forgiveness include:


- > Jeremiah 31:34; 33:8
- > Micah 7:18, 19
- > Matthew 6:12
- > Mark 11:25, 26
- > Luke 6:37; 17:3; 23:34
- > John 8:1-11
- > Romans 12:19
- > 1 John 1:9

To Learn More: Turn to the key passage note on forgiveness at Matthew 18:21-35 on page 1260. See also the personality profile of Joseph on page 70.

his feet^a and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'^b ³⁰And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. ³¹So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. ³²Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. ³³Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' ³⁴And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

³⁵"So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."^a

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

 Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, that He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. ²And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there.

³The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?"

⁴And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made^a them at the beginning '*made them male and female*,'^b and said, '*For this reason a man shall leave*

his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh'?^a ⁵Then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

⁷They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?"

⁸He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning was not so. ⁹And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

¹⁰His disciples said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better to marry."

JESUS TEACHES ON CELIBACY

¹¹But He said to them, "All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: ¹²For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs"

18:29 ^aNU-Text omits *at his feet*. ^bNU-Text and M-Text omit *all*. 18:35 ^aNU-Text omits *his trespasses*. 19:4 ^aNU-Text reads *created*. ^bGenesis 1:27; 5:2 19:5 ^aGenesis 2:24 19:9 ^aOr *fornica-*

KEY PASSAGE

DON'T KEEP COUNT

(18:21-35)



Forgiveness

"I'm sorry."

"I forgive you."

These words are often spoken, but what do they really mean? Is the person *really* sorry? What if he or she offends again? Does the other person have to keep on forgiving?

Peter asked if forgiving a person seven times was enough. Jesus answered that seven times was *not* enough; instead, Peter should forgive "seventy times seven" times. The point: Don't even keep count; just keep on forgiving.

Jesus then told a parable about a man who, after receiving great forgiveness for a large debt he owed to someone, refused to forgive a person who owed him a small debt. Jesus was illustrating that we sinners have been graciously forgiven by God—and are being forgiven daily, over and over again. We should be just as gracious in forgiving others. To refuse to forgive shows that we have not understood how much God has forgiven us.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about forgiveness on pages 1520, 1521. See also the personality profile of Joseph on page 70.

him, "Thus says your son Joseph: "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. ¹⁰You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for *there are still five years of famine.*" "

¹²"And behold, your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that *it is my mouth that speaks to you.* ¹³So you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and you shall hurry and bring my father down here."

¹⁴Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. ¹⁵Moreover he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him.

¹⁶Now the report of it was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, "Joseph's brothers have come." So it pleased Pharaoh and his servants well. ¹⁷And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and depart; go to the land of Canaan. ¹⁸Bring your father and your households and come to me; I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you will eat the fat of the land. ¹⁹Now you are commanded—do this: Take

carts out of the ones and your come. ²⁰Also do goods, for the yours.' "

²¹Then the so gave them carts Pharaoh, and journey. ²²He changes of gar three hundred of garments. things: ten di things of Egi loaded with g ther for the to away, and the "See that you the way."

²⁵Then they to the land 3 ²⁶And they 11 alive, and he Egypt." And he did not be him all the 1 them, and w seph had sen their father 1 enough. Jose and see him



Forgiveness

PERSONALITY PROFILE

JOSEPH'S FORGIVENESS

(GENESIS 45:5)

The power to forgive comes as a divine gift. We choose to forgive, but God empowers our forgiveness. The desire for vengeance can be so overpowering that without God's intervention, genuine forgiveness rarely takes place. God enabled Joseph to choose forgiveness when his brothers deserved retribution. God used that willingness to assure the survival of the very brothers who had conspired to end Joseph's life.

Joseph's early years offer a case study of a dysfunctional family. For years, he was Rachel and Jacob's only son. Jacob had ten other sons by three other women, but Joseph received special treatment. When Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin, Joseph had already become his father's favorite. Jacob singled Joseph out with a special coat of many colors. His brothers despised him.

Intense competition between their mothers, along with Jacob's favoritism, fueled jealousy and resentment among the brothers toward Joseph. Benjamin was probably too young to be involved. Joseph didn't help matters by sharing a couple of his dreams with the rest of the family. These dreams highlighted his future role as ruler over his family. Even Jacob was shocked. The brothers decided to kill Joseph.

God's intervention led to the brothers' modifying their murderous plans. Instead, they sold Joseph into slavery. They soaked the special coat in animal blood and used it to convince Jacob that his favored son had been killed by wild beasts.

Joseph's next years were a roller coaster of experiences. Divine intervention eventually ushered him into Pharaoh's palace where he managed the food supplies in Egypt during a widespread famine.

That famine brought Joseph's brothers back into his life. They came for food and had no idea that they were at the mercy of the brother they had betrayed. When Joseph finally revealed his identity, his brothers were terrified. They knew what they deserved. But instead of revenge, Joseph offered forgiveness and mercy, thanking God who worked out everything for His glory.

Joseph demonstrated the cost of forgiveness. We forgive, not by making the offense unimportant, but by loving the offender. For that, we need God's help.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about forgiveness on pages 1520, 1521. See also the key passage note at Matthew 18:21–35 on page 1260.

JACOB'S JO

46 So he

offered sac Isaac. ²Then of the night

And he s

³So He si ther; do n make of n down with bring you hand on n

⁵Then 11 sons of 14 title ones. Pharaoh 1 their Eng had acqui to Egypt him. ⁷His

lets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. ²⁰Then he took the calf which they had made, burned *it* in the fire, and ground *it* to powder; and he scattered *it* on the water and made the children of Israel drink *it*. ²¹And Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you that you have brought *so* great a sin upon them?"

²²So Aaron said, "Do not let the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people, that they *are set* on evil. ²³For they said to me, 'Make us gods that shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' ²⁴And I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them break *it* off.' So they gave *it* to me, and I cast it into the fire, and this calf came out."

²⁵Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to *their* shame among their enemies), ²⁶then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, "Whoever *is* on the LORD's side—*come* to me!" And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. ²⁷And he said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.'" ²⁸So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day. ²⁹Then Moses said, "Consecrate yourselves today to the LORD, that He may bestow on you a blessing this day, for every man has opposed his son and his brother."

³⁰Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. So now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your

sin." ³¹Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! ³²Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written."

³³And the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. ³⁴Now therefore, go, lead the people to *the place* of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin."

³⁵So the LORD plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made.

THE COMMAND TO LEAVE SINAI

33 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Depart *and go up* from here, you and the people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your descendants I will give it.' ²And I will send My Angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. ³*Go up* to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you *are* a stiff-necked people."

⁴And when the people heard this bad news, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments. ⁵For the LORD had said to Moses, "Say to the children of Israel, 'You *are* a stiff-necked people. I could come up into your midst in one moment and consume you. Now therefore, take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do to you.' " ⁶So the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by Mount Horeb.

SOUL NOTE



Forgiven (32:32) Forgiveness is given to those who repent. The people had sinned greatly against God, and Moses pleaded with God to forgive them. Moses was even willing to take their punishment for them. But God's loving and just response was: "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book"

(32:33). God would punish the guilty ones. God is always ready to forgive those who recognize their sin and come to Him in repentance. Those who are guilty and unrepentant, however, will be punished. **Topic: Forgiveness**

the flocks, with your valuation in shekels of silver according to the shekel of the sanctuary, as a trespass offering. ¹⁶And he shall make restitution for the harm that he has done in regard to the holy thing, and shall add one-fifth to it and give it to the priest. So the priest shall **make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering**, and it shall be forgiven him.

¹⁷"If a person sins, and commits any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD, though he does not know *it*, yet he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity. ¹⁸And he shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish from the flock, with your valuation, as a trespass offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him regarding his ignorance in which he erred and did not know *it*, and it shall be forgiven him. ¹⁹It is a trespass offering; he has certainly trespassed against the LORD."

6 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²"If a person sins and commits a trespass against the LORD by lying to his neighbor about what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or about a pledge, or about a robbery, or if he has extorted from his neighbor, ³or if he has found what was lost and lies concerning it, and swears falsely—in any one of these things that a man may do in which he sins: ⁴then it shall be, because he has sinned and is guilty, that he shall restore what he has stolen, or the thing which he has extorted, or what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or the lost thing which he found, ⁵or all that about which he has sworn falsely. He shall restore its full value, add one-fifth more to it, and give it to whomever it belongs, on the day of his trespass offering. ⁶And he shall bring his trespass offering to the LORD, a ram without blemish from the flock, with your valuation, as a trespass offering, to the priest. ⁷So the priest

shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and he shall be forgiven for any one of these things that he may have done in which he trespasses."

THE LAW OF THE BURNT OFFERING

⁸Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying. ⁹"Command Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the law of the burnt offering: The burnt offering shall be on the hearth upon the altar all night until morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it. ¹⁰And the priest shall put on his linen garment, and his linen trousers he shall put on his body, and take up the ashes of the burnt offering which the fire has consumed on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar. ¹¹Then he shall take off his garments, put on other garments, and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place. ¹²And the fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not be put out. And the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order on it; and he shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. ¹³A fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out.

THE LAW OF THE GRAIN OFFERING

¹⁴This is the law of the grain offering: The sons of Aaron shall offer it on the altar before the LORD. ¹⁵He shall take from it his handful of the fine flour of the grain offering, with its oil, and all the frankincense which is on the grain offering, and shall burn it on the altar for a sweet aroma, as a memorial to the LORD. ¹⁶And the remainder of it Aaron and his sons shall eat; with unleavened bread it shall be eaten in a holy place; in the court of the tabernacle of meeting they shall eat it. ¹⁷It shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it as their portion of My offerings made by fire; it is most



SOUL NOTE

Making Things Right (6:1-7) It is natural to try to escape responsibility for wrongdoing, and it's easy to rationalize mistakes. The Old Testament offerings were designed so that the offender might receive God's forgiveness. But the wrongdoer also had to take responsibility for his or her behavior by making restitution to the person who had been wronged. We, too, must take responsibility for the effects of our sins on others. We need to be reconciled not only to God, but also to those whom we have wronged. Biblical law holds us responsible for our own behavior.

Topic: Forgiveness

holy, like the
fering. ¹⁸All
Aaron may e
in your gene
made by fire
touches them
¹⁹And the
²⁰This is the
which they s
on the day w
an ephah of
half of it in t
²¹It shall be m
mixed, you s
of the grain o
aroma to the
his sons, wha
fer it. It is a s
be wholly b
for the pries
not be eaten

THE LAW OF
²²Also the
²³Speak to
This is the
where the b
ing shall be
burnt. ²⁴The
in a holy
of the taber
touches its f
blood is sp
ash that m
g. ²⁵But
baked sha
bronze pot,
in water. ²⁶
may eat it.
from which
the taberna
in the way
Landed in t

THE LAW OF
7 Likewi
fering
where they
all the tre
shall spring
shall offer
fat that co
and the fat
the fatty l

bring back

on his face
of the king.
want knows
my lord.
filled the re-
arose and
om to Jeru-
return to
him see my
own house.

one who was
s good looks
crown of his
And when
end of every
on him—
it of his head
to the king's
three sons.
s Tamar. She
ance.

years in Jeru-
face. ²⁹There-
ed him to the
re him. And
me, he would
servants, "See,
has barley
Absalom's

to Absalom's
ave your ser-
ab, "Look, I
so that I may
Why have I
better for me
e. let me see
quity in me.

and told him.
om, he came
his face to
en the king

that Absalom
chariots and

horses, and fifty men to run before him. ²Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate. So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, "What city *are* you from?" And he would say, "Your servant is from such and such a tribe of Israel." ³Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your case is good and right; but *there is no deputy of the king to hear you.*" ⁴Moreover Absalom would say, "Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice." ⁵And so it was, whenever anyone came near to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him. ⁶In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

⁷Now it came to pass after forty^a years that Absalom said to the king, "Please, let me go to Hebron and pay the vow which I made to the LORD. ⁸For your servant took a vow while I dwelt at Geshur in Syria, saying, 'If the LORD indeed brings me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.'"

⁹And the king said to him, "Go in peace." So he arose and went to Hebron.

¹⁰Then Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, 'Absalom reigns in Hebron!'" ¹¹And with Absalom went two hundred men invited from Jerusalem, and they went along innocently and did not know anything. ¹²Then Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city—from Giloh—while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy grew strong, for the people with Absalom continually increased in number.

DAVID ESCAPES FROM JERUSALEM

¹³Now a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom."

¹⁴So David said to all his servants who *were* with him at Jerusalem, "Arise, and let us flee, or we shall not escape from Absalom. Make haste to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly and bring disaster upon us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword."

¹⁵And the king's servants said to the king, "We *are* your servants, *ready to do* whatever my lord the king commands." ¹⁶Then the king went out with all his household after him. But the king left ten women, concubines, to keep the house. ¹⁷And the king went out with all the people after him, and stopped at the outskirts. ¹⁸Then all his servants passed before him; and all the Cherethites, all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men who had followed him from Gath, passed before the king.

¹⁹Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why are you also going with us? Return and remain with the king. For you *are* a foreigner and also an exile from your own place." ²⁰In fact, you came *only* yesterday. Should I make you wander up and down with us today, since I go I know not where? Return, and take your brethren back. Mercy and truth *be* with you."

²¹But Ittai answered the king and said, "As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely in whatever place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also your servant will be."

²²So David said to Ittai, "Go, and cross over." Then Ittai the Gittite and all his men and all the little ones who *were* with him

15:7 ^aSeptuagint manuscripts, Syriac, and Josephus read *four*.

SOUL NOTE



One Person Can Forgive (14:33) Despite his pain and anger, David "kissed Absalom," expressing his love and forgiveness. Despite all that Absalom had done, David allowed for the possibility of reconciliation by forgiving his son.

Absalom, however, had no tears, no repentance, no change of heart. Indeed, Absalom would eventually try to take his father's throne (15:10). One person can forgive, but it takes two to reconcile. Forgiveness does not guarantee reconciliation. Forgiveness, however, does put salve on those who are willing to let go of the hurt and wrongs done by others. **Topic: Forgiveness**

- And rivers in the desert.
 20 The beast of the field will honor Me,
 The jackals and the ostriches,
 Because I give waters in the wilderness
 And rivers in the desert,
 To give drink to My people, My
 chosen.
 21 This people I have formed for Myself;
 They shall declare My praise.

PLEADING WITH UNFAITHFUL ISRAEL

- 22 "But you have not called upon Me,
 O Jacob;
 And you have been weary of Me,
 O Israel.
 23 You have not brought Me the sheep for
 your burnt offerings,
 Nor have you honored Me with your
 sacrifices.
 I have not caused you to serve with
 grain offerings,
 Nor wearied you with incense.
 24 You have bought Me no sweet cane with
 money,
 Nor have you satisfied Me with the fat of
 your sacrifices;
 But you have burdened Me with your
 sins,
 You have wearied Me with your
 iniquities.

- "I, *even I, am* He who blots out your
 transgressions for My own sake;
 And I will not remember your sins.
 25 Put Me in remembrance;
 Let us contend together;
 State your *case*, that you may be
 acquitted.
 26 Your first father sinned,
 And your mediators have transgressed
 against Me.

- 28 Therefore I will profane the princes of
 the sanctuary;
 I will give Jacob to the curse,
 And Israel to reproaches.

GOD'S BLESSING ON ISRAEL

- 44** "Yet hear me now, O Jacob My
 servant,
 And Israel whom I have chosen.
 2 Thus says the LORD who made you
 And formed you from the womb, who
 will help you:
 'Fear not, O Jacob My servant;
 And you, Jeshurun, whom I have
 chosen.
 3 For I will pour water on him who is
 thirsty,
 And floods on the dry ground;
 I will pour My Spirit on your
 descendants,
 And My blessing on your offspring;
 4 They will spring up among the grass
 Like willows by the watercourses.'
 5 One will say, 'I *am* the LORD's';
 Another will call *himself* by the name of
 Jacob;
 Another will write *with* his hand, 'The
 LORD's,'
 And name *himself* by the name of Israel.

THERE IS NO OTHER GOD

- 6 "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel,
 And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:
 'I *am* the First and I *am* the Last;
 Besides Me *there is* no God.
 7 And who can proclaim as I do?
 Then let him declare it and set it in
 order for Me,
 Since I appointed the ancient people.
 And the things that are coming and shall
 come,



SOUL NOTE

Cleansed (43:25) When the guilt of past sins weighs us down, we must remember that when we seek forgiveness, God "blots out" our transgressions and forgets our sins. David prayed that God would "blot out" all of his iniquities (Ps. 51:9); Peter called the people to repent so that their "sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). "Blotting out" sins pictures wiping the slate clean. Whatever sins we have committed, God promises to erase them. He knows what we have done, but He treats us as though we have never sinned. Because God has forgiven us, we must forgive ourselves.

Topic: Forgiveness

Nor will we say anymore to the work of
our hands, 'You are our gods.'
For in You the fatherless finds mercy."

- 4 "I will heal their backsliding,
I will love them freely,
For My anger has turned away from
him.
- 5 I will be like the dew to Israel;
He shall grow like the lily,
And lengthen his roots like Lebanon.
- 6 His branches shall spread;
His beauty shall be like an olive tree,
And his fragrance like Lebanon.
- 7 Those who dwell under his shadow shall
return;
They shall be revived *like* grain,
And grow like a vine.

Their scent^a *shall be* like the wine of
Lebanon.

- 8 "Ephraim *shall say*, 'What have I to do
anymore with idols?'
I have heard and observed him.
I *am* like a green cypress tree;
Your fruit is found in Me."
- 9 Who *is* wise?
Let him understand these things.
Who *is* prudent?
Let him know them.
For the ways of the LORD *are* right;
The righteous walk in them,
But transgressors stumble in them.

14:7 ^aLiterally *remembrance*



SOUL NOTE

The Beauty of Forgiveness (14:4-8) The beauty of a lily, the sweet smell of cedars, the strength of an olive tree—God used these images to describe the results of His gracious love. Although Israel had rejected Him, God promised to restore their strength, vitality, and beauty. His love would be like sweet, refreshing dew to them. The Israelites' own sins had destroyed them, but God would rebuild them. This pictures God's forgiveness. He doesn't merely erase our sins; He restores and recreates our broken lives: "Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). **Topic: Forgiveness**

the fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers. ³And they took *him* and beat him and sent *him* away empty-handed. ⁴Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones,^a wounded *him* in the head, and sent *him* away shamefully treated. ⁵And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. ⁶Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ⁷But those vinedressers said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' ⁸So they took him and killed *him* and cast *him* out of the vineyard.

⁹"Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰Have you not even read this Scripture:

*'The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone.
This was the LORD's doing,
And it is marvelous in our eyes?'*^a

¹²And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away.

THE PHARISEES: IS IT LAWFUL TO PAY TAXES TO CAESAR?

¹³Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words. ¹⁴When they had come, they said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? ¹⁵Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?"

But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it." ¹⁶So they brought it.

And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's."

¹⁷And Jesus answered and said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

And they marveled at Him.

THE SADDUCEES: WHAT ABOUT THE RESURRECTION?

¹⁸Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked

12:4 ^aNU-Text omits *and at him they threw stones.*
12:11 ^aPsalms 118:22, 23

SOUL NOTE



Forgive (11:26) Jesus stated that God's forgiveness of us is somehow related to how we forgive others. When we accept God's forgiveness of all the wrongs we have done Him, we should be so grateful that we willingly offer that same kind of forgiveness to those who have wronged us. Jesus told a parable of a person who had been forgiven of a huge debt he owed, but then refused to forgive any of his debtors (Matt. 18:21-35). To refuse to forgive others shows that we do not appreciate the forgiveness God offers us. **Topic: Forgiveness**

SOUL NOTE



His Image (12:13-17) The Jews of Jesus' day were under the dominion of the Roman Empire and were forced to pay taxes to Caesar. Some thought it wrong to pay taxes that supported a pagan government. The Jewish leaders tried to trap Jesus into taking a side on the issue. Jesus took a coin, pointed out Caesar's image on it, and said that since the coin belonged to Caesar, it could be returned to him. Then Jesus added the most important lesson: Our lives bear the image of God; therefore, we should give our lives to Him. **Topic: Money**