

What is Forgiveness? Is it Conditional?

Hebrew Words:

Nasah: "to lift...accept, advance, arise, bear, bring forth...pardon, receive..." (Gen. 50:17; Ex. 10:17)

Salach: "forgive, pardon, spare" (Num. 30:5; 2 Chron. 6:39)

Kaphar: "to cover...to placate or cancel, appease, make an atonement..." (Ps. 78:38)

Sallach: "ready to forgive" (Ps. 86:5)

Sliychah: "forgiveness, pardon" (Ps. 130:4)

Greek Words:

Aphiemi: "to send forth, cry, forgive, forsake, lay aside, omit, suffer, yield up" (Mt. 6:12; 9:6;)

Aphesis: "freedom, pardon, deliverance, forgiveness, liberty, remission" (Mk. 3:29)

Apoluo: "to free fully, relieve, release, dismiss, let die, pardon, divorce" (Lk. 6:37)

Charizomai: "to grant as a favor, pardon or rescue" (Lk. 7:42)

Divine Forgiveness is Conditional:

God is forgiving, but He doesn't clear the guilty (Num. 14:18).

The forgiveness of the Israelites in Joshua's day was conditioned upon their repentance (Josh. 24:19-23).

God would forgive the Israelites *if* they humbled themselves and prayed (2 Chron. 7:14).

God is *ready to forgive* which implies that He doesn't automatically forgive (Ps. 86:5).

They had to turn from their evil ways in order to be forgiven (Jer. 36:3).

Even today, there are times when God doesn't forgive us (Mt. 6:15; Mk. 3:29).

Simon had to repent and pray to receive God's forgiveness (Ac. 8:22).

We are told to confess our sins in order to be forgiven (1 Jn. 1:9).

We Are to Imitate the Forgiveness of God:

We forgive our debtors as God forgives us (Mt. 6:12, 14-15; Lk. 6:37).

We are to forgive others even as God has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13).

Does God hold us to a higher standard of forgiveness than His own?

Some Facts About Human Forgiveness:

It is an obligation (Mt. 6:14-15; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13).

Forgiveness is an act (Mt. 18:21-22); we also see here that we need to "meet in the middle"

It needs to be from the heart (Mt. 18:35).

If someone repents, we must not hold back forgiveness (2 Cor. 2:1-7).

Human Forgiveness (when others sin *against us*) is Conditional:

If a brother sins against us and repents, we are to forgive them (Lk. 17:3-4).

The Corinthians were to forgive the *penitent* brother (2 Cor. 2:1-8).

Like God, we need to be *ready to forgive* (Ps. 86:5).

Even though forgiveness is conditional, we still have an obligation to be kind and gentle (Rom. 12:9-21).

NOTE: The act of forgiveness really pertains to the restoration of the relationship and it is chiefly for the benefit of the penitent party (2 Cor. 2).