

What About ... Forgiveness vs. Revenge

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I'm convinced the world has the wrong idea of forgiveness and the wrong idea of the Christian idea of forgiveness. We've all read novels or watched movies where the victim had to choose between revenge and forgiveness. It seems to me the secular world recommends forgiveness because it's easier on you in the long run. I'm not so sure either of those are true.

When you are the victim of wrong doing, you become keenly aware that there is no justice in the world. When I wrong you and ask your forgiveness, I am asking you to accept the suffering coming from the consequences for my actions. I'm asking for a violation of justice. The line is usually: "Revenge won't bring back your loved one" (or whatever). But the revenging victim is not trying to do that. They are satisfying their sense of justice. When we are wronged, we crave justice. And rightly so. Justice is as right as truth, holiness, and love. Forgiveness violates justice and piles the hurt on the victim.

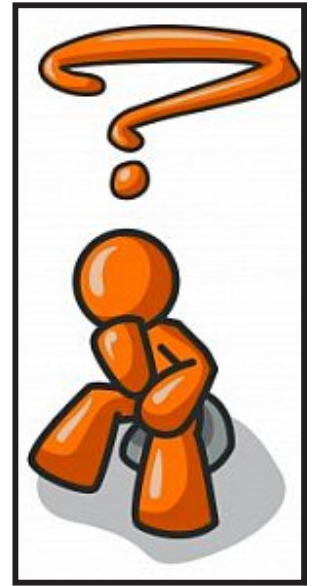
Both revenge and forgiveness have adverse consequences. Revenge invites retaliation. This is the unending downward spiral that the Palestinians and

the Jews are in. Every action invites a reaction. If you put pressure on a drip it will squirt out somewhere. But forgiveness also has adverse consequences. It means living with the hurt, or the problem, the rest of your life, with a realization of the violation of justice. I can recall being falsely accused and punished by the adult CO when I was a teenager in the Civil Air Patrol. I just walked away. And it has bothered me all my life. To this day I wish I had appealed it to his commanding officer. Of course, now I understand vengeance is God's, but there is no evidence that forgiveness is easier on the victim than revenge, even in the long run.

God commanded the Israelites to forgive and Jesus commanded His disciples to forgive. But biblical forgiveness never meant that justice would be ignored. The reason the believer was to forgive was because God would not. Forgiveness does not mean I forget it. It means I understand God will not forget it.

Forgiveness is good only because God is vengeful. Observe:

- Isaiah 65:6 *Behold, it is written before Me, I will not keep silent, but **I will repay**; I will even repay into their bosom.*



- Jeremiah 51:24 *"But **I will repay** Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea for all their evil that they have done in Zion before your eyes," declares the LORD.*
- Ezekiel 7:9 *"My eye will show no pity nor will I spare. **I will repay** you according to your ways, while your abominations are in your midst; then you will know that I, the LORD, do the smiting."*
- Romans 12:19 *Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "**VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY**," says the Lord.*

When Christians seek forgiveness rather than revenge, it is not because we are overlooking sin, it's because we are leaving the justice up to God. Seeking your own justice invites God to treat you according to justice. And believe me, you don't want that.

The forgiveness of the Gospel is not a message of God overlooking sin. If that were so, Jesus would not have had to suffer and die. But He did. And the reason He did is because God is vengeful. His holy character demands it. So He took it out on His Son.

- 2 Corinthians 5:21 *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*