

The Great Release of Forgiveness

When hurt and pain strike deep within your soul, unforgiveness festers there. You may believe you have forgiven, but all you did was discount the offense, while the hurt keeps you in chains. The chains of unforgiveness rob you of peace, and of the ability to build something new.

According to the Law of Restitution (Exodus 22), each offense deserves some kind of restitution for a debt to be satisfied. It is a “paid in full” receipt. As long as you are dealing with things that can be replaced, restitution and reparation are possible. However, if you suffer the loss of an arm, a job, or a loved one, restitution from the offender is impossible. Because the law of restitution cannot always be met, you try to rely on lesser versions of restitution, which may be apologies, reasons, explanations, or excuses.

An **apology** is a verbal admission of wrong-doing by the offender and a statement that he has remorse for causing hurt. Apologies do not restore. When the hurt is so damaging, an apology is not enough to satisfy. When pain persists, you may grapple with “you’re not sorry enough” or the offending party will be forever apologizing, never coming to peace. Sometimes an apology will not be forthcoming because the offender cannot or does not know there was an offense.

Reasons “why” is the next level your heart searches for. Did you throw rocks at me because you hated me or because you didn’t see me? Neither reason “why” would change the fact that I was hurt when the rock that you threw hit my eye. A reason does not restore my sight.

Explanations give information. You could talk about the trajectory of the rock, the force with which you threw it, and where I was standing before the rock hit my eye. None of that information restores my eye.

The **excuse** or blame-shifting to an outside cause is the final and weakest grasp for restitution. “I threw rocks because I didn’t pass the exam” is blame-shifting. When

you are desperate for something to grasp, you may make up excuses for others, such as “His father is an alcoholic,” “She’s having a bad day,” and “She must have had an argument with her husband.”

Use this formula: **RAREX** to be assured of total forgiveness. When you *choose* to give up your right to restitution you are set free to let God restore you.

For example: “I forgive Joni for throwing rocks at me and hurting my eye. She owes me nothing, no \ **restitution**— she does not have to make it up to me. She owes me no **apology**, no **reasons**, no **explanations**, and no **excuses**. I release her 100%.”

By praying forgiveness this way, you quit holding on to any thread of unforgiveness on that issue. If each facet of forgiveness is released, all ties of the sin with the offender are then removed.

This is not always easy to do, especially when emotions are raw and the stakes are high. This is done by *choice* knowing that there will be freedom from constant pain. I would caution you not to rely totally on your emotions as you may never feel like forgiving and thus lose out on the precious peace that you will receive by forgiving.

As long as the offender is expected to provide restitution in any measure, unforgiveness will linger. When you let go 100% of your right to receive restitution, Jesus can step in to be your restitution, for He can restore to you what you lost and much more. He can restore your dignity, your prosperity, and even your sight. Remember, only the supernatural Blood of Jesus through repentance & forgiveness removes sin.

He Owes Me

Chandler just bought for his son, Curtis, an ice-cream cone from the sweet shop at the amusement park. As they were leaving the store, a teenager rushed past them knocking Curtis’ ice-cream to the ground leaving him with only the cone in hand. He cried. Chandler yelled at the teen who, by then, disappeared with his friends. He probably didn’t know what happened or didn’t care.

“That careless kid must replace Curtis’ ice-cream!

“Sir, I’ll be happy to give Curtis another one. No charge,” offered the clerk.

“I want that kid to get back here. Hey kid!! No, we won’t take the free ice-cream.”

At the ruckus, the manager came out. “What’s happening? Can I help you, sir.”

“That #\$% kid knocked over my son’s ice-cream and just ran off. He ought to get back here and pay for a replacement.”

“I’m sorry that happened, sir. Sometimes those things happen when there are so many people. Let me get your son a double scoop cone for the trouble.”

“We don’t want a double scoop of ice-cream. We just need that kid to come back and pay for another one. That @#\$ kid! Why don’t they watch where they are going!” Meanwhile, passers-by look over at the scene.

Finally, Mr. Gibbins, the shop owner, came out. “Sir, Sir, I am so sorry that happened. Let me give you and your son each a three-scoop Sunday with any toppings you’d like.”

“Oh, you people are impossible! Come on Curtis, let’s go. They don’t want to go find the kid. We’ll find him.” He stomped away with his crying son.

This story, though exaggerated, illustrates how you can miss the goodness of God when you refuse to forgive, insisting on restitution from the offender. When you forgive, you allow God to bless you double and triple times through the hand of others.

Don’t Forget them

The three persons you may fail to forgive are institutions, yourself, and God. You live by perception more than by facts, and perceptions can steer you into choppy waters. **Institutions** are entities without a face or an accountable person you can identify who has sinned against you—the

Department of Motor Vehicles, an insurance company, or the hospital. Just because they are faceless, it does not mean you have not been hurt, so, it's important to forgive them too. Examples are: "I forgive the university for losing my grades." "I forgive the insurance company for dragging out my claim and requiring so much paperwork." Heart repentance is also required: "I repent of holding anger, resentment, and bitterness against the hospital pharmacy."

Forgiving the institution of the *Church* is critical to your relationship with God. If whoever is the face of the Church to you—a Pastor, an Elder, or fellow member—has offended you, forgive completely. If you are holding a grudge because the choirmaster did not assign you the solo, or the vestry did not approve your favorite project, forgive and repent of holding a grudge. If you have been abused by a church representative, still forgive. Although you are not required to submit to continued abuse, choose to repent and forgive then move out of harm's way. If you do not, you risk cutting off God and his blessings for you.

The second person to forgive is **you**. People say "I can never forgive myself" when they see themselves as having done something wrong. In utter frustration, a mom may say to her teenage son, "I don't want to deal with you again." The boy then runs away from home and sparks a massive manhunt. She will struggle to forgive herself for what she said to him, for being impatient, for not understanding him, etc.

A parent who leaves children alone in the car while making a quick run into the store only to find harm came upon them, will self-condemn. You blame yourself for an accident when going hiking alone. All these situations are opportunities for constant self condemnation in the heart. If you do not forgive yourself, you are in essence saying that you are greater than God. He promises to forgive all that we bring in repentance and forgiveness to the cross. Is your sin greater than God's ability to forgive? See yourself as the person who has offended you. Forgive yourself. Do it completely with RAREX.

The third person you fail to forgive is **God**. If you perceive that God has let you down by not coming through with what you wanted or when you wanted it, your heart will hold a grudge against Him. Holding unforgiveness toward God will cut you off from

Him. You cannot fully receive from someone you are holding anger against. You will miss the fact that He still does all things for your benefit. You may believe you are waiting for God to answer your prayer while He is waiting for you to do your part to bring the answer. He cannot release wealth to you until you learn to steward your money and learn how to budget correctly on what you have so you can be trusted with more. He is waiting to heal your body as soon as you take steps to respect it and take care of it. He is still there being God, but a wall of unforgiveness stands between you and Him.

You are exalting yourself above him if you do not forgive him.