

Two Types of Forgiveness

1. Introduction: The Dual Nature of Biblical Forgiveness

Scripture reveals two interconnected but distinct **aspects(types) of forgiveness**: (1) **relational forgiveness** may restore fellowship between offender and offended, and (2) **internal release** that **protects the heart from bitterness and surrenders vengeance to God**. Understanding both aspects is essential for biblical living.

2. Relational Forgiveness: Conditional and Restorative

A. The Conditional Nature

Luke 17:3-4 — "Take heed to yourselves: If your brother sins against you, **rebuke him**; and **if he repents, forgive him**. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turns again to you, saying, I repent; **you shall forgive him**."

- Greek *aphiēmi* (Strong's #863): "to send away, let go, permit to depart" - **forgive**
- Forgiveness here is explicitly tied to **repentance** (*metanoō*, #3340: "to change one's mind")
- The pattern: offense → rebuke → repentance → forgiveness → reconciliation

Matthew 18:15-17 — "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone: if he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear you, then take with you one or two more... And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church: but if he refuses to hear the church, let him be to you as a heathen and a tax collector."

- Restoration requires the offender's responsiveness
- Unrepentant sin limits relational restoration
- The goal is always to "gain your brother"

B. The Unlimited Scope

Matthew 18:21-22 — "Then Peter came to him, and said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times? Jesus said to him, I do not say to you, up to seven times: but, up to seventy times seven."

- No limit on how often we extend forgiveness when repentance([Luke17:3](#)) is present
- The parable that follows ([Mt18:23-35](#)) shows the unforgiving servant lost relationship with the king

Mark 11:25-26 — "And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your sins. But **if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your sins**."

- Forgiveness maintains our relationship with God
 - Greek *aphiēmi* again: releasing the debt (**forgive**)
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3. Internal Release: Unconditional and Protective

A. Releasing Anger and Bitterness(resentment)

[Ephesians 4:26-27, 31-32](#) — "Be **angry**, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath: Neither give place to the devil... Let all **bitterness**, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you."

- Greek *orgē* (#3709): "**wrath, anger, indignation**"
- The command: don't let anger become entrenched (overnight)
- Greek *pikria* (#4088): "**bitterness**" — a settled, poisonous **resentment**
- This release is commanded regardless of the offender's repentance - **for your own well-being**
- We forgive *as* God forgave us (after confession/repentance) — Christ died while we were yet sinners ([Rom5:8;Lk17:3;1Jn1:9](#))

[Hebrews 12:15](#) — "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest **any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.**"

- **Bitterness grows like a root**, affecting not just the individual but the community
- Hebrew equivalent: *mārāh* (#4843): "**to be bitter**, make bitter"
- Internal unforgiveness defiles the heart

[Colossians 3:13](#) — "Bearing with one another, and **forgiving** one another, if anyone has a complaint against any: even as Christ **forgave** you, so also do you."

- Greek *charizomai* (#5483): "**to grant forgiveness**, show favor freely"
- The standard: Christ's forgiveness of us

B. Surrendering Vengeance to God

[Romans 12:19-21](#) — "Dearly beloved, **do not avenge yourselves**, but rather **give place to wrath**: for it is written, **Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord**. Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him; if he thirsts, give him drink: for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

- Greek *ekdikeō* (#1556): "to vindicate, **avenge**, punish"
- We are commanded to **surrender the right to personal vengeance**
- "**Give place to wrath**" — make room for God's wrath, not our own
- Active love replaces passive resentment

[Deuteronomy 32:35](#) — "**To me belongs vengeance, and recompense**; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste."

- Hebrew *nāqām* (#5359): "**vengeance**, revenge"
- God reserves the right to execute justice
- Our role: **trust God's timing and providence**

[Leviticus 19:18](#) — "**You shall not avenge, nor bear any grudge** against the children of your people, but you shall **love your neighbor** as yourself: I am Jehovah."

- Hebrew *nāṭar* (#5201): "to guard, bear a **grudge**, keep anger"

- The prohibition against internal grudge-bearing predates the New Testament
- **Love is the alternative to vengeance**

Proverbs 20:22 — "Do not say, I will repay evil; **but wait on Jehovah, and he shall save you.**"

- Active waiting on God replaces active retaliation
- **Deliverance comes from Jehovah**, not from our vengeance

4. How the Two Aspects Relate

A. Internal Release Precedes Relational Restoration

Matthew 5:23-24 — "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you; leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way; **first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.**"

- **Reconciliation requires initiative**, even when we are the offender
- **A heart free from bitterness is ready to pursue peace**

Romans 12:18 — "**If it is possible**, as much as depends on you, **live peaceably with all men.**"

- By the power of God, we control our internal posture; **we cannot control another's response**
- "As much as depends on you" — **our responsibility is our heart condition**

B. Internal Release Does Not Eliminate Consequences

Genesis 50:15-21 — "And when Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, **they said, Joseph will perhaps hate us, and will certainly repay us all the evil which we did to him... And Joseph said to them, Do not fear: for am I in the place of God?** But as for you, you thought evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore do not fear: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And **he comforted them**, and spoke kindly to them."

- **Joseph released vengeance to God** ("Am I in the place of God?")
- He saw God's sovereignty in his suffering and extended practical mercy (nourishment, comfort)
- Yet his brothers lived with the consequences of their choices (years of separation, guilt)
- Hebrew *nācham* (#5162): "to comfort, console"

2 Samuel 12:13-14 — "And David said to Nathan, **I have sinned against Jehovah.** And Nathan said to David, Jehovah also has put away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of Jehovah to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die."

- God forgave David's sin (relational restoration)
- Yet consequences remained (the child's death)
- **Forgiveness and consequences can coexist**

C. Both Aspects Reflect God's Character

[Psalm 103:8-12](#) — "Jehovah is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in mercy. He will not always contend: neither will he keep his anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

- Hebrew *chesed* (#2617): "lovingkindness, mercy, steadfast love"
- God does not harbor eternal anger against the repentant
- Complete removal of transgression: "as far as the east is from the west"

[1 John 1:9](#) — "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

- **Conditional forgiveness:** "if we confess"
- Greek *homologeō* (#3670): "to confess, acknowledge"
- God's character guarantees forgiveness upon confession

[Micah 7:18-19](#) — "Who is a God like you, who pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and you will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

- Hebrew *nāsā'* (#5375): "to lift, carry, take away"
- God delights in mercy, not in maintaining anger
- Complete disposal of sin: "depths of the sea"

5. Practical Summary for Ministry

The believer is called to:

1. **Maintain a heart free from bitterness** — releasing anger daily ([Eph 4:26](#)), surrendering vengeance to God ([Rom 12:19](#)), and guarding against roots of bitterness ([Heb 12:15](#)). This is unconditional and protects our own souls.
2. **Extend forgiveness when repentance is present** — following the pattern of [Luke 17:3-4](#), pursuing reconciliation ([Matt 18:15](#)), and forgiving without limit ([Matt 18:21-22](#)). This reflects God's character and may restore relationship.
3. **Recognize that both aspects work together** — **internal release creates readiness** for reconciliation, while **relational forgiveness completes the process when possible**. Where reconciliation is impossible (due to unrepentance, death, or distance), **internal release still frees the heart of the offended**.

Key distinction: By God's power and grace, we can control our **internal release**; we cannot control whether **relational restoration** occurs. Both honor God. Both are commanded. Both **reflect the character of our forgiving Father Jehovah and His only-born Son**.

Desiring to live by every word that comes from the mouth of Jehovah ([Deut8:3; Matt4:4](#))

-[Sid Nash](#): 05/19/2026. Latest version: <https://sidnash.org/docs/ForgivenessAspects.html>