

Forgiving Others and the Bible

Robin Calamaio, Copyright 2011

<http://www.freelygive-n.com>

Introduction

This article is not ... the standard line. But, it will be thought provoking, and if you have ever been sinned against, you might find this article sensible ... perhaps even refreshing. On the other hand, you may choose to totally reject all the forthcoming points and continue to use, perpetuate, and propagate ...

The Standard Line

We must begin ... with a Christian being sinned against. Let's assume a real violation - an actual sin - has occurred against you. While there are many derivatives to the standard line, when all extraneous material is stripped away, here it is: "*Have you forgiven the one(s) who sinned against you?*" This is now the central focus in the mind of the one asking the question. The actual sin against the Christian, and all the evil consequences of it, are in the background.

This burning inquiry is usually not immediate. Normally, there is some acknowledgment of the injurious nature of the adultery, battery, slander - or whatever constituted the incurred violation - before this move to "*the standard line.*" But, that is not always the case. Many Christians believe the first responsibility of those who have been sinned against is to forgive the offender. Even secular reporters are aware of this, and often stick a microphone in the face of a Christian who is burying a murdered child (or some other great wrong) immediately asking, "*Have you forgiven the one who did this?*"

This knee-jerk reaction, this rush to "*the standard line,*" is often as cruel as the primary offense. That means, this standard line, I allege, is itself an offense. Many times, ... **it** ... is sin.

So, what is my problem with "*the standard line*"? Actually, there are several, but here is the bottom line. The victim of the sin is turned into ... the wrongdoer. Once it has been determined that wholehearted forgiveness has not been extended to the offender, charges of "*an unforgiving spirit,*" or the coddling of "*a root of bitterness*" begin. May God forbid that I strip the sinned-against-saint of his/her power position as the offended party.

The Power Position of the Sinned-Against-Saint

This may seem like an oxymoron, but it isn't. The victim of sin will be vindicated - if not in this age, then at The Judgment. Ultimately, evil will not triumph. It can not. God has determined "*the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the godless is momentary*" (Job 20:5). Every single unpardoned sin by every morally accountable being (angelic or human) will be fully exposed (along with that sin's effects and fallout), followed by an eternal sentence. Obviously, most sinful creatures do not believe this, but such a belief will have no impact upon promised activity from the Creator. That reality places the victim of sin in the power position. Vindication, and its accompanying victory, will come. The only question is when. I am speaking of this in a very unemotional way. I am addressing sin's destiny in factual terms. While this is correct, it is also correct that sin, in real time, traffics in emotion. This we must examine.

Sin's Power

Sin is never void of emotion. Sin brings damage that is loaded with emotion. And some sins reach very deep in their impact and consequence. The type of offense, and amount of damage done, determines what emotions come - and their intensity. Whether grief, anger, fear - these emotions give power to sin. The power is negative ... and very real. What this means (for the one sinned against) is

that while vindication is certain - emotional waters still must be navigated. And even when vindication does come, such waters may still need navigation. Herein lies the purpose of this article. There are tools - powerful tools - available to help those struck by sin so as to successfully traverse these poisonous undertows and currents.

The Power to Forgive - Tool Number 1

Let's say someone sins against me and I forgive them. Let's further assume that same person leaves this age outside of Christ. Has that sin, that I forgave, and its justice, been satisfied? The answer is, "No." That sin is still part of their "*certificate of debt*" (Col 2:14). At that time, forgiveness by God for that offense is not available. So, if I forgive someone and God does not - what has the violator actually gained?

On the other hand, let's say I refuse to forgive some offender. And yet, that individual exits this age in Christ. What penalty will be imposed on that transgressor for that sin? The answer is ... there will be no penalty. Well, at least no damning penalty. Eternal rewards may be affected, but ultimate justice for that sin will not be exacted upon anyone who is ultimately found to be in Christ. That is the whole point of having Jesus as one's Savior. He alone possesses "*the material*" that neuters sin - His blood. So, my action, one way or the other, ultimately has no bearing on the final disposition of that particular sin. This brings us to our first tool.

There is benefit in seeing God Himself as the primary target of a sin. That is because ... He is. That is tool number 1. David (in the unparalleled, sordid account of murdering Uriah the Hittite on the heels of adultery with his wife, Bathsheba) responded to the prophet Nathan's confrontation, "*I have sinned against the Lord*" (2Sam 12:13). In Psalm 51, the declaration is expanded. "*Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Thy sight*" (Ps 51:4). What? Uriah the Hittite was massively wronged, yet in David's Holy Spirit inspired prayer, he is not even mentioned. So, what is going on here? As astounding as this may seem, God's offense at sin is so immense that any other "*complaint*" about some sin does not even amount to a "*speck of dust on the weighing scale*" (Isa 40:15) ... comparatively speaking.

Understanding that sin is against God is the most fundamental truth of this sin/forgiveness matter. Sin catapults one directly into the cross hairs of a sinless Creator and His hatred for sin has such unfathomable depth that any attempt to describe it ... fail. To study, in great detail, all the biblical material about Hell and the wrath of God - gives but a glimpse our Creator's "*position*" towards sin. And Hell only exists because of sin He has decided He will not pardon. The only moral creatures not terrified by this last statement are those who are currently "*dead in their trespasses*" (Col 2:13). So, my point? A person sinned against, who fully releases the matter into God's hands, has successfully used this tool. Read on to see what that means. Surprises lie ahead. (See End Nnote 1 for a tremendous email I received on this last point – used by permission).

Jesus

"*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do*" (Lk 23:34). Jesus requested this during the last stages of torture while seeing His impending murder in full view. Some believe Jesus was not speaking of His assailants - but requested this on behalf of the redeemed through the ages. Even if such a spiritualization is correct, this was not the case with Stephen. While being murdered, "*he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them'*" and then died (Ac 7:60). Notice, the one being violated is making this petition - not an outsider saying they should. Second, neither Jesus nor Stephen are addressing their assailants. The address is to God. There is no declaration akin to, "*I forgive you.*" While such a declaration from Christ would have meant something (Mk 2:1-12), from Stephen (or us) the matter is far from resolved. So, whether a perpetrator of sin (David) or the recipient

of sin (Jesus or Stephen), these men all understood this most fundamental of truths - sin is against the Creator of life. Any unrighteous, hostile action against life is primarily an assault against Him. And to Him the violator must account. *“Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath”* (Ro 12:19).

Having said this, I am not at all convinced that Jesus’ or Stephen’s response, while being sinned against, is to be the norm - as one who carries *“the standard line”* might contend. *“And when He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, will Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also”* (Rev 6:9-11). Does this sound like a petition for pardon? And there is no rebuke from God for this request. And consider this. For them, this life is over and an eternity of bliss lies ahead. Additionally, their martyrdom in Jesus Christ has secured incomprehensible reward. Don’t you find it remarkable they are not asking God to forgive those who had spilled their blood? Yet, there is no sin in this request for justice. There is no *“root of bitterness”* as they are calling for God’s vengeance and righteousness.

So, here is the point. The victim of sin must know that any sin is primarily against God. But as one in the line of that fire, there are options as to how one might react. This is to be determined between the victim of that sin and God Himself on a case-by-case basis. *“Standard Line”* bearers, beware. This is a power platform, created by God, for the victim of sin. It is holy ground between a saint and his/her Creator. Beware of meddling in this holy ground.

If you are an outsider to some sin blow, and are seeking to help one who has been damaged by sin, teach the foregoing material over and over and over and over.

The Power to Forgive - Tool Number 2

There is an old saying, *“Except for the grace of God, there go I.”* This has nothing to do with minimizing sin by others or by ones own self. It is simply an acknowledgment of our own ability to foul up in grand ways. Sometimes, there is value in seeing our own sinfulness and using that as a tool to put someone else’s sin (even against us) in perspective. Solomon put it this way. *“Do not take seriously all words which are spoken, lest you hear your servant cursing you. For your heart knows also that you likewise have many times cursed others”* (Eccl 7:21,22). When we forgive, we are simply removing ourselves from the offender’s pending transaction. And, who knows - if we get out of the way, maybe the offender will *“see”* his/her real ... Problem.

If you are an outsider to some sin blow, and are seeking to help one who has been damaged by sin, teach this over and over and over and over ... along with tool number 1.

The Power to Forgive - Tool Number 3

If you are having trouble letting go of some sin against you, start looking at the power that particular sin is holding on you. Is it poisoning your attitude, present happiness, present energy? Is its power dominating you - perhaps even causing more damage than the original injury? And what about the offender? Is he/she currently loping along through life in momentary joys, while you sit in a cesspool? Once a victim begins evaluating along these lines, internal decisions to fight back might soon follow. But this takes power. It takes power from God. There have been a few times I have known a root of bitterness is growing in me. I had to prostrate myself before my Creator and earnestly petition that He arrest its growth - and grant me the tools to uproot it. Do you think a prayer of this nature might be one *“according to His will”*? (1Jn 5:14).

If you are an outsider to some sin blow, and are seeking to help one who has been damaged by sin, teach this over and over and over and over ... along with tool number 1 and 2.

Sometimes ...

... small pockets of justice in the current age are found. If a victim is fortunate, his/her situation comes into such a circle and justice is experienced presently. For example, a wise parent can rightly decide on some family conflict. An equitable school administrator will rightly settle disputes between students, teachers, or student to teacher. A competent employer will stand behind an employee in the right. A just Family Court will find for the violated spouse and/or children. But, as we all know, such good fortune is not the rule. Most situations will not receive proper disposition until the great and terrible day of the Lord, The Final Judgment. This hope, and certainty, must be forwarded as often as is appropriate so as to assist the offended saint navigate these waters.

When an Offender Asks for Forgiveness

On occasion, individuals have asked me to forgive them for something they did to me. When I have sensed a sincere apology, it is amazing how the offense instantly evaporated. Now, had the offender murdered my child or something, I am not so sure such an evaporation would have immediately occurred. But, in these lesser offenses, the release has been instant. I have even found myself defending the offender - telling them how some of my actions may have contributed to the mess. Maybe I will relate some of these stories if I do a video version of this article. These encounters have always been cleansing and instructive. On the other hand, if the offender never acknowledges his/her sin, an entirely different dynamic is in play. This leads to ...

Twisting Forgiveness

Peter once asked Jesus, “*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.*” He then told the story of the unmerciful slave whom a king had forgiven a great debt. Even though that slave had been released from great debt, he refused to forgive one who owed him a very small debt - even though the small debtor begged for patience and mercy. When the king learned of this intolerance, he became angry and handed the unmerciful slave “*over to the torturers.*” Jesus concluded, “*So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart*” (Mt 18:21-35). For “*The Standard Liners*” this last line is the beginning and end of this forgiveness matter. A sinned-against Christian's first duty ... is to forgive any violator - brother or not. Otherwise, damnation from the Father, and by the Father, is certain. With such a belief, it is no wonder that any offense against a Christian is considered a superfluous matter. But, such an understanding is errant on several fronts.

To begin, Peter is asking about forgiving ... a brother. This is Christian toward Christian sin. Therefore, Peter's question, and Christ's coming answer, address a narrow circumstance. A Hitler is not in this loop. Second, in this parable, forgiveness is being asked for by the offender. In Luke's gospel, we find this little jewel. “*If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him*” (Lk 17:3,4). But what if the brother does not repent? Are we to instantly forgive him? This passage in Luke can rightly be integrated into Peter's and Jesus' discussion in Matthew 18. Here is why.

In Matthew 18:15-18 (six verses before Peter's question above), Jesus laid out the procedure for dealing with an unrepentant brother. Listen to this. “*And if your brother sins (“against you” is included in some early copies), go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you in order that by the mouth of*

two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax gatherer” (Mt 18:15-17). This last phrase is an imperative, “he must be” followed by a singular, “to you” (soi). Does this sound like the imperative to forgive a brother “from your heart” - as we find in Peter’s conversation a few verses later? And couple this with Paul’s instructions in 1Corinthians 5:9-13. “I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler - not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.” This last word is plural - and means expulsion from the church fellowship itself! So, I guess this is what “the Standard Liner’s” expect us to believe. “Unrepentant brother, I forgive you from my heart. But, now I will no longer associate with you or even eat with you and you also cannot come back to this church. But know that I totally forgive you. Have a good life ... somewhere else.”

I wrote my Master Thesis on this brother expulsion passage. “Matthew 18:15-17 as a Procedure for Addressing Offenses Between Christians.” Get it for free at <http://www.freelygive-n.com>.

So Why Forgive? What is This All About?

I think this is about the victim - not the offender. When one forgives from the heart, the issue is basically over from the victim’s standpoint ... at least presently. It is possible his/her presence may be requested at The Judgment, but I doubt that because God Himself is the primary One offended. But, it is also clear that one who has been sinned against can successfully turn the matter over to God - thus, releasing the offense to Him - without guilt for still wanting to see justice from God visit the perpetrator. That’s what is happening from martyred saints before the Throne. Can we arrive there in spirit, too? I bet we can. But, even if I can’t/won’t/don’t - should my weakness, or rebellion, or inability to access God’s power for such a gain ... be imposed upon you?

By the way, have you ever heard a Christian preacher or teacher speak about this forgiveness matter in such a way? Now, I want to address some other variables that must be extended to one wounded by sin.

Time and Space

The victim of sin is reacting/responding to the wrongdoing of another. Time and space must be granted for the victim to determine all appropriate actions. There may be an array of appropriate responses the victim can, and should, pursue. The victim did not start the problem and should never be turned into the problem. Think of it this way. If the evildoer had never committed the offense in the first place, the victim would simply be going about his/her way in life. But, with this offense, that journey has been interrupted and the victim of the unsolicited evil must now react to the uninvited situation. To turn the victim into the bad guy through use of “the standard line” is a great evil.

Victim to Victor?

Is that the goal? If so, how does one who has lost a child to murder become a victor? When I think of victory, I envision celebration. While many sin scenarios may end in celebration (“victim to victory!”), there are other times I would call it, “victim to integration.” The victim successfully integrates the offense into his/her life journey and productively moves forward. Actually, this may be the norm as most offenders never acknowledge the harm caused and do not see justice for the damage

done. And speaking of justice, while its execution does carry celebration, I suspect sin will cause it to be, more often than not, a “sober” celebration. “*I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,*’ declares the Lord God. “*Therefore, repent and live*” (Ezek 18:32). Justice? Yes. Peace with its dispensation? Yes. Necessary and right? Yes. But the actual sin that forces a display of justice ... is void of joy. When the subsequent victories over sin are stripped away, each sin still stands in all its foulness, ugliness, destruction and death.

While it may be true that pardoned sins are forever expunged and removed “*as far as the east is from the west*” (Ps 103:12) and, in the coming age, “*the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind*” (Isa 65:17), I still think the work of Jesus on the cross will always be remembered. The scars (or holes) in His hands and side were present in His resurrected body which He used to challenge Thomas’ unbelief (Jn 20:24-29). I believe He will eternally carry these “marks” ... and we will know why they are there. Conversely, I believe Hell is a place of sins remembered. Hell may even be an eternal “open wound” for our Creator. Maybe us, too. The angels and humans abandoned there will be actively continuing in sin as they are conscious and do reason (see Lk 16:19-31, Mk 9:42-48, and Rev 20:10 and 21:8). That means that sin, and its power, will never be completely forgotten, unacknowledged, or entirely abated. Sin will have no more victories, but it’s consequences will be on eternal display (at least before God) and, though just, ... it will be an exceedingly sober display ... and victory.

Sin’s Havoc and New Fruit

Here is something else to consider about this forgiveness matter. Let’s say Stephen had survived being stoned ... as a quadriplegic. Let’s say he lived another 15 years. He observed life going on around him, but was now unable to participate in its most basic of functions - like going to the bathroom by himself. Do you think he would always think mercifully toward the evildoers who put him in such a dependent situation when, on occasion, he soiled himself or was unable to get a drink of water in a timely fashion? This is not really hypothetical. We can find individuals permanently maimed by gunshot, beating, drunk driving - and forgiveness is a once-for-all-time permanent act? Maybe in some situations that is true. But I know, even with less severe violations, some of that sin’s consequences were not present in the immediate aftermath. That sin bore new fruit - rotten fruit - down the time-line. In those instances I have had to rework the forgiveness process in turning over the situation to God.

Natural Disposition

People are ... different. What a massive understatement. In this area, some people are naturally very forgiving. They are also slow to take offense. And it is true, that in many instances, it is honorable “*to overlook a transgression*” (Pr 19:11). But, others take offense deeply and readily. And they find it very difficult to forgive ... tending to be grudge holders. Ultimately, arguments over why a person is at one end of the spectrum or the other are not all that important. But, a proper understanding of a sin-injured person’s natural disposition helps in knowing what strategies need to be employed for successful navigation through the event. Allowing for such differences may be seen by some as excuse making. But, I see it as a proper discerning of one’s metaphysical bents and inclinations. Deal with what is - not what one would like, or think, ought to be.

The Exception Clause

It is true that some victims of sin want to cling to the injury, nurture the bitterness, and remain a victim perpetually. They have no interest in accessing tools designed to help navigate through the injury, thus are making no resolution attempt. Such an instance must be confronted. But, as you will

see, such a confrontation has nothing in common with *“the standard line.”*

The easiest case is when forgiveness toward a repentant Christian (the offender) is withheld. Forgiveness must be extended. Jesus’ response to Peter in Matthew 18:21-35 fully applies here. But again, proper biblical understandings must rule. If this was a grievous violation (as listed in 1Cor 5:9-13, Gal 5:19-21, Eph 5:5,6 and Col 3:5,6) the perpetrator should be re-categorized as a *“so-called brother”* (1Cor 5:11). That changes everything. For example, if a professing Christian commits adultery, automatic forgiveness for repentance is not required. The betrayed mate is not required to forgive *“from your heart”* (Mt 18:35) and take the penitent mate back. The violated saint remains in his/her power position (as described in this article) and retains options on his/her chosen response, in his/her chosen time-line. Anyone who violates this God-created platform is sinning ... and is now adding his/her own sin to the situation.

Harder cases involve what appears to be a wallowing in the injury - with no effort toward resolution. But the operative phrase in that last statement is *“appears to be.”* This mandates great caution and careful listening by those who choose to *“confront”* this injured individual. This *“confrontation”* must begin with the stated purpose of obtaining more information from the victim as to where things presently stand. Keep in mind it is not God’s will that any of His children be overcome by sin - ours or others. That means God is always active in destroying sin’s power (and the agents of it) in the saint’s life and experience (1Jn 3:8). While this *“confrontation”* you are initiating may ultimately indeed prove to be part of that process, it may also be that He has already initiated some other things ... and any blundering here may interfere with His initiatives. By listening, you might discern a seemingly insignificant development that you know is groundwork for triggering a total reversal in how a victim is handling a matter. God is in the business of delivering His own from sin - all sin - and that will happen. Make sure He sees you as a partner in that work - not an impediment. That means, *“Listen!”*

Secondly, any *“confrontation”* should be in the spirit of an appeal to the victim. Demonstrate how this festering wound is damaging his/her own life and those around him/her. All this requires spiritual wisdom and would preferably be forwarded by several people who have reached spiritual consensus on the matter ... before God. But any position *“against”* the victim is a last resort position, a prayer-filled position, a wise-counseled position ... yet, it is sometimes a valid position. Still, we know this is a temporary position because God will not let the condition stand. But, in the short term, if the victim of a violation refuses assistance, there is little any of us can do.

Those who carry *“the standard line”* know nothing of the foregoing analysis. They are simply coming with their opinion based upon minimal, and even misunderstood, biblical understandings of sin’s nature, power, impact, and final disposition.

A Couple More Notes About “Standard Liners”

Those who carry *“the standard line”* are never the center target of the sin, but oftentimes they do occupy a circle fairly close to it. This makes them feel inside enough so as to have the right to get involved. And their top of priority? Forgiving the offender. Their internal clock weighs how long is too long for the victim to withhold wholehearted forgiveness toward the offender. It is also worth noting that the most aggressive standard line offenders have almost never suffered the same kind of violation they are calling the victim to release. But, to them, that is irrelevant anyway. Christians are to forgive - regardless of the sin - and failure to do so is sin. I would really like to say that those who carry *“the standard line”* mean well, but I am not altogether convinced of this.

Bottom Line

Ideally, it would be great if every sin incurred was immediately released by the victim. That

way, its internal impact would be minimized. If you can do that - don't let me talk you out of it. But, people, and circumstances, are different - as is the aftermath of a sin's consequence. And a perpetrator's actions after a violation also creates its own dynamic. Variables must be weighed, options must be considered, and time for reaction must be granted. If we are outside this sin blow and decide to inject ourselves into this process, we must always, always, always keep the victim of that blow in his/her rightful power position.

One More Point

When Stephen said, *“Lord, do not hold this sin against them”* (Ac 7:60), do you think everyone there ... became a Christian? Maybe so. But, then again, maybe not. If I ask God to forgive someone who has violated me, does He have to? Some say so. Right in the middle of the unrepentant brother procedure (Mt 18:15-17) and Peter's question about forgiving others (Mt 18:21-35), Jesus told the disciples, *“Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven”* (Mt 18:18). Some believe this is in reference to our decision about another's sins. But if you believe you have the power to bind or loose someone's sins so that God is obligated to yield to that, why not just declare pardon for everyone - and be done with it? Include the fallen angels as well. The reason you do not do this is because you know that ultimate power does not reside ... with any of us. So, if I forgive someone for sinning against me, and yet He does not, does that make me ... more merciful and compassionate than God?

Be careful how you answer that. *“Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord’”* (Ro 12:19). Forgiving those who sin against us has more to do with us - than the perpetrator of the sin. It has to do with our recovery, productivity and influence - on family, friends and fields of harvest before us. God wants to help us and there are options on how we release a violation, and its effects, to Him. But know the violator cannot escape his/her appointment with the Maker *“with whom we have to do”* (He 4:13). Each sin, and its final disposition, rests squarely there. We cannot interfere with this beyond an appeal for mercy. He is the One primarily offended and *“injured”* by these sins. *“Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart”* (Gen 6:5,6). It appears our age (*“the last hour”* - 1Jn 2:18) is intent upon the same moral destination. *“For the coming of the Son of man will be just like the days of Noah”* (Mt 24:37). This may be more than just a reference to His *“surprise arrival.”* Bottom line ... God occupies the ultimate sinned-against power position. Of this I am glad ... and terrified. You see, I don't even want to discuss what I have served up to Him ... and continue serving. But that is my problem. And you have yours. And those who sin against us ... have their own.

Stretch Yourself!

For a definitive study on the Tithes: http://www.freelygive-n.com/Tithe_and_Offering.html

Visual Gospel Presentation: http://www.freelygive-n.com/Gospel_Presentation.html

Find these, and other challenging free works at <http://www.freelygive-n.com/>

In 1977, Robin Calamaio became a Christian. BA, Bus Admin (Milligan College '90) and Master of Divinity (Emmanuel School of Religion '92).

End Note 1. I uploaded this article on Scribd.com before putting it on my website. I have received

several great emails immediately – some quite personal. But, here is one by Joe Hudson that he said would be okay to share. While he made several great points, I want to underline/italicize the one that was most enlightening to me.

“This is an excellent study in a very difficult area, Robin. I have, in years past, been taught that to forgive means to forget. Hogwash. We aren't wired that way. The tools you described offer a far more realistic road to forgiveness than idealistic platitudes ever could. I also think that we need to realize that, although we can be offended - even deeply so, as in your example of the murdered child - only God is sinned against. *It is His law and commandments that sin violates, not our own. Forgiveness of sin is, therefore, God's place, not ours.* This relieves us of the terrible burden placed on victims, as you pointed out so clearly, by those who seek to "help" them. The tools you mentioned should be what we provide, not empty religious concepts that do nothing but condemn and bind the victim. One more point - in more than 40 years as a born-again Christian, I have seen far more forgiveness by means of integration into life and moving on, than I have of "just get over it." Never, however, have I seen it this clearly stated. Well done, my friend.

Joe Foster”

“*Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Thy sight*” (Ps 51:4) – yet, Uriah the Hittite had adultery and murder committed against him! So, we are sinned against, but the violation passes right through us and lodges against God Himself because, “*(i)t is His law and commandments that sin violates, not our own. Forgiveness of sin is, therefore, God's place, not ours.* Sin, all sin, every sin, any sin is against God. We get hit, but that act does not end ... lodged in our heart. Joe has nailed this point about why sin is against God and why it is a matter between each moral creature and Him. I was close in explaining this – but Joe, you nailed it! Thanks so much. RCC