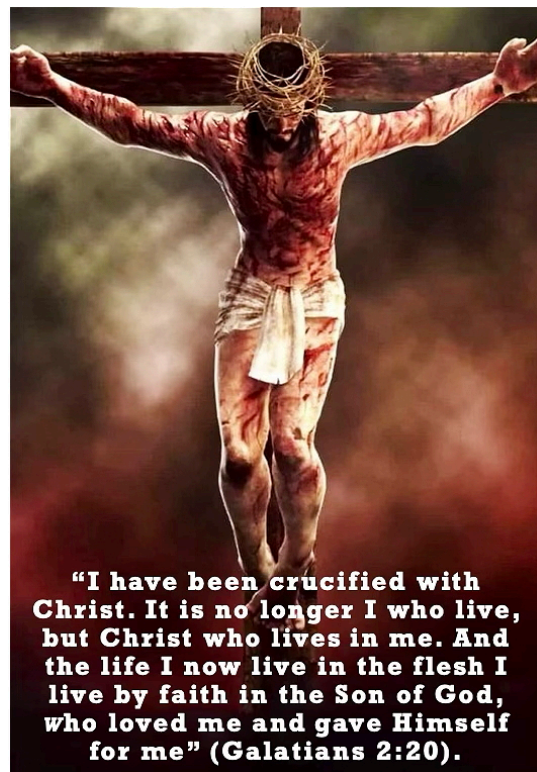


To be *genuine* in Christ is to forgive and ask forgiveness!

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Each year we reflect on what our Lord Jesus accomplished for us as we commemorate Good Friday. We're reminded of a premier act of obedience that the *genuinely* born again take because we so overwhelmingly appreciate how much we personally needed to be forgiven. This act of obedience out of grateful love for our Lord is **forgiveness**. How grievous that within Christianity, whether forgiving from the heart or humbly asking forgiveness is almost as rare as finding love in hell! Over our years of serving our Lord through His Spirit, it's saddened us to observe how few Christians even among the *genuine* even see the need to forgive or to ask forgiveness of those they've offended. Perhaps it's because they easily give in to their sin nature or because Humanist teachings have deceived so many in Christianity. But there's a pervasive insulence that "I don't have to obey God's Word when it comes to forgiveness."

What's being rejected is? *"Love...keeps no record of wrongs"* (1Corinthians 13:4,5). Because of love we are commanded that when we're emotionally hurt by others, we must forgive them: *"as the Lord forgave you, so you also must forgive"* (Colossians 3:13; see also Matthew 6:14,15). And when we hurt others, we are equally commanded, *"So if you are bringing your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift"* (Matthew 5:23,24). The truth of your identity as Galatians 2:20 asserts below must be your reality if you are to live as *genuine* in Christ with Him living within you. Anything less is sin.



During our decades of following Jesus as our Lord there have been times in which He has compelled us to flee people who refuse to extend forgiveness to others or ask forgiveness when it's needed. And those who hinder others from taking appropriate biblical steps when it comes to forgiveness have severed relationship with us. It crushes our hearts when we hear Christians

habitually voicing disdain toward *any* human for whom our Lord died. The blinded arrogance which fills their tone is such a discredit to the sacrifice our Lord Jesus made.

***“Once a bitter or hurtful person is deceived,
he does not recognize that he is deceived,
because he has been deceived!”***

We're amazed by how very, very few Christian friendships hold each other accountable to refrain from voicing bitterness and disdain for others. What shallow relationships they must have! While they may socially support each other, their toleration for slander deeply defames our Lord Jesus and His sacrifice. And in place of the humility it takes to ask forgiveness of someone they've hurt, many choose instead to give presents or do acts of kindness—but refuse to ask forgiveness.

In light of what our Lord Jesus accomplished for you so that you will live crucified with Him don't take up an offense against anyone, and quickly ask forgiveness when *you've* offended someone (1John 2:3-6). **Keep this pattern in mind when you are hurt by someone:**

1. Did he or she say or do something with malicious intent, or did they hurt you unintentionally? The vast majority of hurt feelings are caused by unintentional acts. In fact that person may not even be aware that they've offended you!
2. If they don't realize they've hurt you and therefore haven't asked your forgiveness, can you just forgive them in your heart and walk away from the offense?
3. If you won't be able to let go of what was said or done, then you need to either go to the person and discuss it, or forever shut your mouth about it. If you don't do this, you'll tell others what happened, causing you to sin by slander.
4. If you do tell others, then you need to ask their forgiveness for having slandered *and* forgiveness of the one against whom you've held resentment and spoke ill of.

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- Pray right now for the Holy Spirit to reveal to you anyone you've offended. Is He bringing any specific people to mind? Write down their names.
- Then take action to make contact. Don't presume they should forgive you. Instead, always take the humble attitude of the prodigal son, whose heart and words recognized that *“I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am unworthy...”* (Luke 15:18,19). When you ask forgiveness with a humble heart, the person you've offended has hope that you don't intend to hurt them again. Don't say “I'm sorry” and leave it at that. It's imperative that you start with something like, “Would you please forgive me for (and cite the specific).” And be sure to ask those who care about you to pray and hold you accountable to follow through. Even if the person you hurt doesn't choose to forgive you, you have obeyed your Lord's command and opened a relational door which the person you hurt may later decide to walk through. If the person resists your attempts to reconcile, don't respond with bitterness or resentment. Pray for them!!!
- Please, don't participate in communion until you've done this. (See 1Corinthians 11:27-32.)