

* Apart from God's mercy and grace, all we can earn from Him for ourselves is death. But God teaches us lessons about forgiveness and love in the matter of our own sins. Then we learn how to put ourselves right with each other. Others can then learn from our example of contrition.

* When we think of sin and its consequences we think of things that are bitter, (or salty or sour, like sour grapes and teeth on edge).

* The consequences of our sin need not be salty or sour. If they are, we can turn the bitterness and teeth on edge to something of value, for that is why God does not strike us dead as we deserve.

* God gives us forgiveness, and He gives us chances to rectify and recompense our sin situations, if we plead for all of that. But he also gives us consequences, to refine us further. Then we need to be brave enough to take the consequences

* David was brave enough, and placarded his own sin, Psalm 51. He gave the words to the musicians and the congregation sang of his sins. But that did not take away the consequences which David found out to his great sorrow.

After the fasting and weeping and praying, he had to endure the sour grapes with his teeth on edge. After the death of the child, he felt the butter and honey and the sweetness returned for him and he thought outwardly again and took his renewed chance with the Lord whom he loved. "David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped." He feasted on bread after his fast, and it was butter and honey and sweetness again for him.

* So we rejoice in God's present gift of grace that covers us in His son's absence and with His love in our hearts we patiently wait until we see His face. If we ask He will reclothe us in our rightful mind, and He will refill us with His wisdom, and we will be better servants for Him.

* We love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God, and knows God. Whoever does not love, does not know God, because God is love, 1 John 4.

2. SIN AND ITS OUTCOME

When recognition of sin begins and the sinner feels repentant there is the firm possibility of "I am sorry". But the outcome of this process is not always straightforward. It does not always follow on how it should be.

It seems that it is also imperative to consider "forgive in the measure that you will be forgiven", otherwise we will find ourselves in the company of the unforgiving. Consequently, because of that verse, do we wish to be in the company of those unforgiven? If we are with them then how is the body whole?

Then the believers have a problem –

What to do with the unforgivers, if they refuse to accept the repented sin, and will not respond to it.

Penitence is between the offender and the offended person, and God. But sometimes the two, the offender, and the offended, cannot agree, for the offended will not accept the penitence of the offender. Then God is the ultimate arbitrator. Before God lies the sin, the penitence and the

contrition. God will forgive the remorseful to a state of absolution, for He has pre-recorded His policy and promise about that.

Then, next, reconciliation can be made in human terms, or not, according to the mind of the offended. No one asks the offended to forget, but forgiveness is imperative, as in the measure they wish to receive it themselves. Measuring sins, for a tally, or for intensity, is foreign to God, and should be foreign for us sinful ones, as well.

3. MEASURING PENITENCE

Measuring penitence is impossible for we know not the heart of another, so a measuring of it and a perception gained of it, is a slim reed for complaint. There can be no justification there in proclaiming personal judgements on the matter. No one can say, "He is not penitent enough".

If there is intransigence on the case, then our important doctrine of reconciliation, the Apostolic Precept, is also badly affected. Then we are in disarray, and Jesus is not here with us, in that place of dysfunction, disability and sin. That is a fearful place to be, apology refused, repentance not accepted and "No, you cannot have reconciliation"! No holy One is there. If we would go down that path, we are forgetting our own sins, and the worth of joy and reconciliation that God feels in the aftermath of repented sin.

We need to think of the murderer, Saul, who even with a name change to Paul, needed to confront the widows and children of those whom he had tortured and murdered. The horrors of the consequences for Paul are unimaginable, until those Christians, who made up the church to which he became affiliated, forgave him and received him with love. God required that of them, and they understood, for they had also learned that they needed forgiveness for their unequally measured sins.

If we have some members who are unable to forgive, or reconcile, then it would have to be said, that the unforgivers themselves then become the sinners in the matter, and are outside that holy Place. For there by God's grace, "I am forgiven, but only in the measure I forgive".

4. UNREASONABLE CONDITIONS OF RE ENTRY

- or mountains too high to scale

Everyone knows about putting one's gift before the altar and going to reconcile for a sin. But why would an offended make any conditions so complex for the continuing worship of the sinner, and refuse to take anything less?

Surely such conditions are made together and if the conditions are of re entry are not mutually agreeable, that is a setting up of punishment!

We are reminded of the compassion in James 5:20. To convert a sinner "from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death". So, if we live intuitively and impulsively doing good (works), and live by that faith we espouse, if we become faithful and goodly, Godly servants, if we all lived our lives enabling others to reach their potential, and to find and fulfil their passions, along with our own, then we show the glory of God, and save souls for Him. Those within the veil, in that Holy Place, understand those lessons that God teaches about sin.

There is a most profound and exciting scenario in our lives, when that uplifting of ourselves, and the uplifting of others occurs, for we are blessed of God. We all rise together to be better servants of His. We need to see everything in our life, our sin, and our suffering, and in fact everywhere, and in everything, an extension of God's will and purpose. So everything we do/say/pray is for Him and His sake, not for ourselves, or our own. All of my knowing the Scripture is vanity unless I try to put that knowing into a more enlightened Way. All of that relationship with God and His son is crushed, if I work evil on my brother.

We know the lessons of doing good for His sake. We know the lessons for those against whom evil is done, whose "bones are broken", who suffer for His sake, and who are living on a tortured path of consequences. Do we wilfully make the consequences worse for our brother than even God has asked of him, because we are angry and vengeful? David taught us about bones broken and spirit downcast. Would we take joy in breaking more bones and further downing our brother for the sake of the pleasure of revenge?

We know the joys of reconciliations, and seek to multiply them, for His sake. David also taught us that for his joy at his reconciliation with God was boundless.

5. LESSONS ABOUT HARD HEARTEDNESS

What are the lessons for us if some continue to be hard hearted in His/our name? It seems as if a broken system is in place. The hard evil ones are discredited, because of their own failings. But they still try for gain, with vengeance, at another's expense.

That is a broken system, where God's holiness and His message is in a cracked pot. We will forgive the unforgivers, if only they will stop. But, it seems we are impotent to put a stop to it. We do not want to hear that cacophony from the shallow end of the pool, for the voices at the deep end are more in tune with the example of His son.

How then can we reverse the unholy unforgivers, and get them to change gear in their minds to a state of being able to forgive? We are not asking them to forget our sin, but to change their hard heart, to an understanding heart, if not for their own sake, if not for me, the sinner's sake, then for God's sake, and His glory.

6. FORGIVE THEM, FOR THE KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO

Do the unforgiving know not what they do? Perhaps some of us are really ignorant and do lack skills in the art of forgiveness. So then, it is, after all, an art, a learned and Godly gift. Surely the aim of forgiveness is not that we are vindicated, and eased into peace again, but that people believe in Him, and His power.

It will happen for Israel when they believe, and repent of their sins like stoning and crucifying. Then God will be glorified, and Israel and many more people will believe.

There are several acts of forgiveness recorded in Scripture.

- * The forgiveness by the members of the emerging NT ecclesias, for the murderous Saul/Paul,
- * The forgiveness for the remorseful Peter by the Lord, for his anger and his denials.

* The forgiveness of the adulterous/murderous David, by God, who recorded for us David's repentance and subsequent remorseful state, all prompted by the reminder of faithful prophet, Nathan. Oh, for more Nathan's to help us believe in God's wise and wondrous policy.

* And, as well, there is Joseph's forgiveness of his former, evil, and now penitent brothers.

7. JOSEPH

The forgiveness of Joseph for his brothers stands out, as an act of love for those repenters, that they could all come closer to God in that act. He wanted his brothers to truly believe in God and His promises.

Forgiveness, and its resolving with a formerly mistaken, or penitent sinful one, brings not only returned health and peace, but it glorifies God. This is where we learn of the generosity of Joseph, even in the face of hardship and trial and the terrible consequences of his brothers' sin, that in all of it, and then with their penitence, he glorified God.

Joseph's life was enhanced and enriched by his terrible experiences, and so peace and love flowed through his veins when he forgave his brothers, and sought their well being. They were amazed at his kindness to them. He was pained that his brothers did not see the strength of God's will in the matter of their sin. "Be not grieved or be angry with yourselves", "I came to preserve life, you meant evil, but God brought good out of it." He needed to be reassuring to them that he had no vengeance for them.

So often in forgiven sin (whether it be an omission or commission) with the enduring of the consequences we see enshrined the will of God, and Him glorified, (if only we will look). In the believing of this that God is glorified in the pleas for forgiveness, and the enduring of consequences, sinners are, (like Joseph's brothers, and the adulterous David, and the murderous Saul/Paul, and the denying and angry Peter) made "perfect" as well.

The grace that Joseph had for his brothers, the grace he lived by, loved by, was led by, shone through, and so his reassurance to them, is his finest hour, for he converted them to a better way. "Forgive us our trespasses" those sons of Jacob said. And he did. And their regret was illuminated with their remorse, and God accepted them to fulfil His promises.

Not for Joseph the unforgiving path, for he was forgiving of them, as he in his imperfectness from sin, also wanted forgiveness of God. He knew that forgiveness is a fruit of the spirit, borne of true understanding of God, and His message. So, Joseph passed from his life and left rich memories with his brothers. They saw that Joseph believed that God was in everything, and that shored him up against bitterness or vengeance.

He left them with a model of a life of pristine integrity and grace filled forgiveness, and that brought them all peace. And why was all that necessary? Not to vindicate Joseph, and show him up to be the best leader, and better than they were, but to give God the glory, to best mission for Him, and His purpose.

8. LOOK HOW GRACIOUS CAN WE BECOME!

"Oh Lord remember not only

the men and women of goodwill,

- but also those of ill will.

Do not remember all the suffering
that they have inflicted upon us;
but remember the fruit we have bought,
thanks to this suffering -
our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility,
and courage and generosity,
and the greatness of heart
that has grown out of all this
- and when we come to judgement
let all the fruit which we have borne,
be their forgiveness."

This prayer is quoted in an anthology "Forgiveness and Other Acts of Love", and was found on the body of a child at the time of the opening of a concentration camp in Germany, after WW2.

If that poet can turn the fruit of that sin, into such a forgiving fruit for God, can we not turn sin with repentance, and the plea for forgiveness and reconciliation, to our brothers and sisters? If we can, there in our midst there will be something glorious for God?

Our manner of forgiveness and reconciliation of those who speak about their mistakes, their omissions and commissions, and yes, even sin, our manner of forgiveness and reconciliation, will be the fruit we bring to God. We are all blessed by the forgiveness and reconciliation that others do, especially when it is clothed in pristine integrity, like Joseph did, for it is then an acceptable gift for Him.

But, if there is no forgiveness, and no reconciliation, and only anger and vengeance, then we bring like Cain, an evil fruit to God. We are all shamed by that gift of our brothers and sisters. For in their unforgiving, and their un-reconciling, they know not what they do.

May we learn this art of forgiveness, this Godly gift, because of our love for the Lord of Forgiveness, and forgive for His sake, and His glory.

9. HURTERS AND HEALERS

Tale telling dissidents are hurters - not healers, and they do us harm. In cultivating others to work evil against those of us who sin, they do the devil's work, not God's work. When it seems that their mouths cannot be stopped, then mouths work angrily not only against he who offended but against Him. They do us all harm.

The victims of (our) history are often not virtuous and innocent. Why would we expect anyone would be innocent? No one is innocent. We are all wounded victims, or wounded sinners. And we all react to our consequences, or our tormentors, differently.

There are some Christlike ones who resile from the long term hurts, having asked for forgiveness themselves, they forgive their continuing tormentors, and grow towards Him, even within the torment. They take their consequences as God asked them to do. They make some glorious fruit for God, Psalm 51:13, for they help other transgressors to find His way. For the example of those, the healers and the healed, we praise Him. They teach us the fruit of the Spirit by their endurance example.

10. THE UNRECONCILED

Some amongst us are not so resourceful about making reconciliation, and live in social, or Christadelphian decline, and eventually go from us. They feel in disgrace, and drift away from us, in a languid stream, like unwanted flotsam. They feel disenfranchised, and some of us have made sure they feel like that. They are disenfranchised, for some were sure to create that for them. If they were not disfellowshipped, they were "disassociated from"! Is this of God? Is this to make us pure? Is this to keep the faith? God is made a laughing stock if all this is done in His name.

Apologies are important remedies for breaches, so we begin there for our own sins. Apologies alleviate the sufferings of those who have been wronged, or feel wronged, and help in the healing process. When we hear apologies, we praise God.

11. WE ARE NOT ALL RECONCILERS

- but why do we distrust our reconcilers?

Of course, we do not all need to actually hear apologies and see penitence, for often that is the work of conflict resolution and the mediators and reconcilers, amongst us, in whom we trust.

Some people though, not trusting the reconcilers, ignore hearing about the apologies, and never recognise the pleas for forgiveness. They are deaf to the records of apologies and penitence. Why is this so? Is it so that more vindication and vengeance can be extracted?

Both states - of neglecting to give apologies, and being deaf to pleas for forgiveness, and reconciliation, are sinful. They are against the teachings of Christ.

Acknowledgment, apology and repentance and reparation are powerful interactive words, and we need to use them with passion between us for the hurts. Then re occurrence of our sins may not be so prevalent.

Always a response to an apology is critical. Isn't healing what we want more than anything, for ourselves of our sin, and for others with their sin? Sin, penitence, forgiveness and reconciliation and restoration, primarily spoken about with God, and then to each other, is a golden thread restored, and the broken jewels are then bound together again into a necklace, suitable for a King. We would be ready then for our coming King.

We would do it all for His sake, and for His glory, that more may know Him. We would be healers. We want to be healers. We need to be healers. Then can be an end to the torment. It can be our own torment, or the torment of others, all hurting from the consequences and needing to deal with "broken bones". "Joy" will then come, when the healing occurs, Psalm 51:12.

So there are two sorts of sinners/hurters in this argument about sin. There are -

1. Unrepentant and unremorseful sinners, but as well,
2. Those who are exclusive, having unforgiving, unreconciling hearts, and an anger for the offender which never ends.

They do not believe what they hear, so that they can go on using sin for vindication and vengeance for their own pleasure.

So why do some prefer to be hurters, and not healers? Where are their wise and understanding hearts?

12. BROKEN BONES

We don't always know details of penitence and forgiveness and reconciliation among other would be saints, so we do need to trust the details that others/healers have, and that they have worked in the Godly way, well, with good conflict resolutions and capable mediators.

Some cannot accept this, and that presents more puzzles. Is that why we have broken bones, long after we have asked for forgiveness and asked for reconciliation?

James 5 fits well with the Psalm 51 reference. Both Psalm 51 and James 5 tell us about our sins covered. God does cover sins for our sakes, but that is secondary. Primarily, He does cover our sins, not for us, but for His glory. So others may know Him.

Elias (of James 5), "prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not... And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain", Why? For God's sake, that's why! "That this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again", 1 Kings 18:37.

There are two women servants who benefited by blessings wrought by God, the woman with her ever present and filled cruise of oil, and the other woman and her loved and raised-to-life son. That was benefit for those two sisters, but much more so, to glorify Him. Else all of God's servants would be healed of all troubles, tragedies, and ills, yet we know that does not follow. Again, if there is no relief, that is why we need to do the troubles well, tragedies, and ills - for His sake, so that others may know Him.

There in James is the ultimate in this message, "He which converteth the sinner ... shall save a soul from death, and that hides a multitude of sins", v. 20.

And so God answers our prayers, with His aim in mind, so that more souls may be saved from death. We have those blessings - for His sake.

David (of Psalm 51:13) asks that his "bones which thou hast broken may rejoice". Why? That he "may teach transgressors thy way, and sinners shall be converted unto thee".

13. WHY IS IT THIS GODLY PROCESS RIGHT?

Why are we encouraged in this more complex Way? It is a progression of the SRFRR policy of God - sin, repentance, forgiveness and then reconciliation. But why has this complex Way an even harder addition? Why do we need to add to all that we do, "for His sake"? Can't we have any of

the glory for enduring the suffering for ourselves? No, that is not what He promised, nor is it what we need.

It becomes like a further extension in our lives. We are being encouraged along this Godly policy path with this extra recovery sense from sin and suffering - for His sake, for His glory, Psalm 51:13. The whole process of recovery, and the eventual freedom from consequences, makes that process glorious, and even more Godly

How, also, do we understand continuing consequences? How do we understand the suffering that continues in our God forgiven state? Why do the accusers continue in their accusing sin, and our suffering for it, is that all for His sake also?

I am forgiven, by God, yet I suffer, and I am troubled - to make another saint for Him and His glory? So, I must with new found wisdom, "pray and wait", for His cause, and not my relief?

So there are two glorious states.

1. The forgiver, the reconciler, does it all for His sake, or,
2. The penitent, continuing in the consequences, trying to make reparation, still suffering the evil, for His sake, also.

We are, often, in both of these wonderful states, so we can glory in it, whichever it is, in His name, for His sake.

14. INGLORIOUS AND EVIL

It is inglorious, and evil, if we are in the contrary states.

1. Unrepentant and unremorseful sinners, or,
2. Those who are exclusive having unforgiving, unreconciling hearts,

Those people behave and do so, for their own sakes.

We build the vision if we so glorify His name.

We destroy the vision, if we, ingloriously, fuel a broken down system.

David said, "I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me, for against thee only have I sinned. Purge me, wash me, then shall thou make me to know wisdom. Take not thy spirit from me. Restore my joy. Then I will teach transgressors about you".

There it is, it is all so that I might teach others about God. Like David's broken bones, my bones are broken as well, but they too, with David, will again rejoice, with joy and gladness.

Is that broken bones mended? Is that restoring the vision?

15. PRAY AND WAIT

If we can view God's mercy to us when He answers our prayers, less as a benefit for ourselves, we can, using the "pray and wait" principle, better comfort those excluded souls, like our returning children, our troubled brothers, and our traumatised sisters, even our condemned

ecclesias, if we know we need to wait. That waiting is a time for listening to God, for then we can hear Him tell us what He will do next, and what He wants of us.

If we do not understand this principle then we are in danger of losing those now faithful and returning ones. For they, continuing in their suffering, in their repentant state, with contrition, suffering continuing consequences, ask "Why, and for how long, O Lord, do we wait for this to mend?" It may be difficult and even cruel to for them to hear, "You suffer, so He can be glorified".

16. WE CAN TEACH THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT IN OUR SUFFERING

So for Him, contrite hearts may not immediately be comforted, and so they must endure the wait, through the endless cruel consequences. But, if we can turn the wait part into a nourishing time, rather than a time of despair, towards the eventual granting of the request, the "pray and wait" time will be in itself a blessing.

So then in that fearful waiting for the present evil to subside, and the fear of what the future may hold, fear will go from the false accused. And maybe He will find a different and surprising way forward that we would not have thought of.

So we must be there in that wait with these sufferers, wait with them to recover their potential, to enhance their integrity again. We can sorrow along with the repentant sufferers, and would never be jubilant with those who say, "They got what they deserved", for that has to be un Christlike, and un Scriptural. And therein lies a terrible lesson as well.

The Parable of the Prodigal teaches us that God is the Father of all (of us) good fathers and all (of us) prodigal sinners, and He glorifies good fathers, and also He receives returning sons with gladness, and so all the broken bones are healed.

So we must not shut off that ultimate lesson that the Father showed us. We must never beat reconciling sons with hard hearted stick, to prevent the return. Those hurters are far from the Kingdom of God. Those also who gather more sticks, like unreliable "truths", to make more hard stick hearts, are also evil.

They misunderstand the spirituality of the Truth, and what truth stands for. They have forgotten to cultivate wise and understanding hearts. Over the years we have seen many of those returning sons beaten away again with hard stick hearts.

If the prayer part of the "pray and wait" principle is not lost, and we sit patiently and quietly beneath the everlasting arms, the son beaters will not reach us, or reach those that shelter with us. And God will "hear" our/their pleadings better there.

17. SO THAT

Why do we ask for daily bread? We have enough. I knew not why I asked ... But now I know ... It is "so that ..."

Everything is "SO THAT ..."

Isn't healing from the hurts of the broken bones, what we want more than anything, for ourselves of our sin, for others with their sin, so that ... ?

When the offended and the offender are restored to God and then to each other, it is like the golden thread is restored, and the reconstructed necklace is again beyond price. Reconciliation of the sinner, and the sinned against, is for each other, but primarily for God. We would do it all for His sake, *so that ...*

We would help mend broken bones and help with healing for His sake, and for His glory, *so that ...*

We are mistaken if we think sin is a catalogue of wrongful deeds and broken commandments, for sin really is an inability to reach our potential.

We are not mistaken if we see righteousness coming as a result, not of a catalogue of good deeds and kept commandments, but of a learning built up by faith, where we enrich our potential by becoming healers, for His sake, *so that ...*

We practice penitence, forgiveness and reconciliation - or we encourage it in others - after there is a sin. Then we receive/give SRFR with gladness, *so that ...*

We might see regressions. And we are still not wrong, if there is a return to sin, for the 70 x7 Godly principle is in place. So SRFR is a continuing thing, which we are asked by God to practise, either with the same sinner and sin, or with different ones. It is us imitating Him, *so that...*

We also imitate Him if we forgive the unrepentant, *so that ...*

He does forgive them, and tries calling them again and again, never giving up that they will one day turn.

So we should, to imitate Him, find it in our hearts to forgive the repentant, and as well, even the continuing sinner/repentant, *so that ...*

We don't need to worry about "harm to the church", or "leavening the lump" for the lump is only there when we harbour unrepentant sinners. The lump is known of God and He helps us to solve problems with wisdom and strength and then that enriches us for the prolonged battle with sinners and sin, our sins, and the sins of others, *so that... .*

We don't need to worry that it does not appear that the sinner is repenting, for God sees their heart and we do not. So we continue on the Godly forgiving path, never looking back, *so that ...*

Now surely the main point is made. We do sin, or someone else does sin, and then we/they practise penitence and forgiveness and reconciliation, not for our sake or for our comfort, but for God's glory.

There it is, - it is all "*SO THAT*" I might teach others about God.

That I "may teach transgressors thy way, and sinners shall be converted unto thee", Psalm 51:13, "that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again", 1 Kings 18:37. Then broken bones will rejoice, as David said they would.

18. ALIENATION - OR NOT

It appears that many of us struggle with the fact that we should alienate the sinner from being part of us. We forget our own sin, and focus on what we think is the worst that man can do

against God, and so we think "cast out" as our solution. We say the lump is being leavened "if they stay". And if they won't go, then we must tell them to go.

Here are some further comments on the theme of penitence, confession and forgiveness and reconciliation and some Scriptural cases, where we might think obvious covenanted ones, who, in their sin, were, or were not repenting, and whether they were reconciled to God, or to the ecclesia.

This list begins with **Cain**, Genesis 4.

Cain was desolated that he had behaved so badly, and said to God, after his confession and repentance, that his punishment for murdering (manslaughter - in anger) his righteous brother, was more than he could bear, and that he feared for his life of those who would pursue him with murderous vengeance intent to kill him. That fear was a consequence of the punishment for slaying and hiding the fact of the death of his more righteous brother. So, in the forgiving, and enduring of the punishment, God said Cain could wander the earth with a forehead mark. That mark was not an evil mark, but just a recognition mark, a reminder mark really, to remind everyone, that anyone with premeditated vengeance to harm Cain, would be 7 fold avenged by God.

So Cain's sin, the penitence, the confession, the forgiveness and the punishment was all there, but the worrying consequence was taken away for Cain, and so then he set up house with a wife and family, (albeit away "from the presence of the Lord"). That story is a best lesson against vindication or vengeance, for it is the Lord's prerogative not ours. They are both, vindication and vengeance for God's consideration, not for our consideration.

And now **Esau**, Genesis 33.

Did God not forgive Esau? We assume He did, for God had other plans for him, different to Jacob. He had a second rate blessing at the time of parting from Isaac, and was blessed as Abraham's son, and will be especially blessed in the future, as a promised son of Abraham.

Whatever we might think of Esau, God is the judge, not us. Esau had to learn to understand his sin, when he went from Isaac. He knew about sin and forgiveness from his home lessons, for it is doubtful that he was ill taught. However, it was from home after the quarrel, contrite or angry, that Esau went far away, and then bloomed under God's care. Esau sinned, and we read of his regret. How far that regret went we do not know.

Esau took the punishment, pleading unsuccessfully for the special blessing from his father. He took the secondary blessing and the consequences of leaving the family unblessed of the special blessing. He was still a son of Abraham, and as such was blessed by God, for he became a wealthy King of Edom, a chieftain with a great household, and many servants and soldiers, as well as many wives and children, and eventually "Edom" did serve his brother, making reparation, as God requires of sinners, if possible.

However, Esau also learned and practised grace which he used with Jacob, whom he had earlier known as a betrayer with a trick. From where did he learn graciousness? Maybe he learned in lessons of old from his home. Esau returned to meet Jacob, from Edom, in his royal robes, with 400 men. He had earlier forgiven deceitful Jacob, and had sent reconciling messages to him.

Now he wanted to make his peace with him, and bless him. He ran to meet Jacob filled with love, and from that fraternal affection he never wavered. Esau was concerned with the generosity of Jacob's gift and wished to spare his brother's wealth. He offered to care and protect Jacob at his time, which offer Jacob turned away, with, seemingly, another little trick.

Jacob compares Esau's kindness with the generous and loving ways of God, and that grace, which Esau brought to Jacob, pleased Jacob who was grateful for it. "I have found grace", Jacob said. So, Jacob appreciated Esau's understanding heart, and Esau's anxiety to reach out and be friends with him. It was Jacob who behaved questionably at the reunion meeting.

Remember that Jacob was not perfected yet. It is true that Esau may never have been perfected, as Jacob was, but, Esau was forgiven of God, for his immaturity and selfish and self centred way of life, when he lived with Isaac and Rebekah. (It is from that Edom direction that Christ will come also in his kingly robes, so it is not all evil in Edom).

And now **Judah**, Genesis 44.

Self sacrifice is the way of life for saints, and, after so much turmoil in his life Judah found that to be the best way, at last. Judah did the sins, told his father lies, did the rearing of wicked sons, did the adultery with Tamar - and was forgiven of it all by God. He grew in grace to be a better saint, and was then ready to sacrifice himself for his brother. He said to Joseph, "Take me instead". That was a wonderful growing point for Judah, and we would do well to follow his self sacrificing example.

It was because Judah was concerned for the eternal welfare of his brothers, and he knew that self-sacrifice was the only way to the Kingdom of God. We must all be "Judahs" who cannot bear to do anything that will "grieve" our Father". If we can move to that point - from the grieving that we do cause God, so often - to the self sacrifice of ourselves, we bless Him.

And now, **David**, 2 Samuel 11 and 12.

But David knew of the intentions of the Lord, and had taken the vow even to be the Lord's anointed. Yet he sinned wilfully in the matter of Bathsheba, and then the murder of her husband. This is premeditated adultery and murder. Nathan reminded David to say "sorry" in a very eloquent manner, and from then on he was a changed man about that sin. So the guilt does not remain, not forever, surely. Consequences may, but not the sin. Else why would David talk so much about his sin and the forgiveness of God for him?

Nathan told David that there would be continuing consequences, and David often mentions those consequences in his Psalms. David's sin, of adultery and murder with his forgiveness, and punishment (the illness and death of the child) are well known and written for our remembrance and as lessons for us. So are the consequences, well known to us, (family problems and tragedies in his reign). It was no easy thing for David, to publish his sin to the musicians and it is not for any of us, either. But it is what God asks us to do.

However, God does not ask us to publish another person's sins, and that is what we often do!

God is blessed when a heart and mind are confirmed together in a response to God about the sin. That is what is required, yet we cannot see that response in others, only in ourselves. We can never be sure about others, we can only be sure about ourselves.

Now **Peter**,

We are told Peter's sin of three lies and three denials, when he cursed and swore that he knew not the Christ. We are told that after the cock crew, it was like Nathan's reminder to David, and Peter went out, and wept bitterly. So Peter sinned and was penitent and obviously forgiven and reconciled to Christ and his Father. We are scarcely told of any consequences, of that occasion. But we do know that after the ascension, Peter confirms his love for the Lord, and is then entrusted by Christ his Lord with the great work to "feed my sheep".

The **Corinthian brother**: 1 Corinthians 5, and 2 Corinthians 2.

Here is a man who slept with his father's wife, that is, incest, 1 Corinthians 5. (Some commentators suggest that it may be a divorce and remarriage situation for this woman).

Paul advised that the Corinthian brother be put out of the ecclesia, yet, in 2 Corinthians 2, when his repentance is known, Paul advises bringing that same man, (marginal reference), back in, forgiving him and comforting him.

There was a leavening of the lump when the sinful man was present in the meeting and so he was asked to separate with counselling, to help him heal. Then with the healing and the acknowledgment of his sin, and his repentance, the invitation to return is advised by Paul. Here there is the acceptance in the meeting with forgiveness and loving care. And now the leavening of the lump is no longer there. So penitence, forgiveness and reconciliation is the thing, against which we cannot argue.

These momentous characters in Scripture provide mighty lessons in sin, repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. We might not all be perfected Jacob's, or Joseph or, or, or, or But we could be represented by some of these. We would do well to remember them and many others when we decide to ignore our own sins, and cast other sinners out. God knows, God forgives, and so we need to exercise caution in our own exclusions, in His meeting place.

19. NEW TESTAMENT CONFIRMATION

Cain did an evil and wicked thing, murder really, (although some say "manslaughter", that is, not premeditated). Cain took a life. He took a life from a righteous man. According to the later Law of Moses, he should have been killed himself, (if he could not escape to a City of Refuge). Why did not God slay Cain, or why did not God allow another to slay him with vengeance?

The "the way of Cain" is the sin of an angry murderer, a "brute beast". And the murder was the result of Cain not making a suitable sacrifice. Cain's anger and his murdering was the result of not living the Divine Law, adequately. King David did not live the Divine Law adequately either, but his murder of Uriah, and his adultery with Bathsheba, was premeditated, and planned to a

staggering degree. Unforgivable? Well God decides. And his consequences, and then after many more blessings from God, he is in the Hebrews 11 record.

Now no one suggests future reward, for Cain and Esau, for we cannot tell. But we can suggest that God accepted Cain's repentance and gave Cain some breathing space and protection.

We do have reaccepted, repenting Esau, and as well "fornicators" in the NT, (the prostitute), and Saul renamed Paul, and many others noted, all who have been accepted, on repentance of their profanity/blasphemy.

It is all in the repentance, after the terrible sin and the blessings of acceptance.

20. FOCUS ON REPENTANCE

We need to draw attention to repentance, rather than sin and punishment.

Certainly God did hate Esau, "For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

It has been said that was the punishment. Esau had no repentance from Isaac, who stuck firmly to God's plan of the blessing going to Jacob, but after Esau left home Esau did find some grace and favour for the brother whom he would have killed with "fury" at the time of the refused special birthright blessing.

So there is a change of heart now, with Esau. And we do not have God's judgement about that later incident, except that we know Esau was blessed, and was not killed, as was his due for his wicked despising of the birthright. He was punished and endured the consequences. Esau did serve his brother and was filled with generosity and grace for him.

And yes, there is no unrighteousness with God, (so He hates our sins also). But He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. For He stretches forth His hand to the disobedient and the gainsaying people. We do not know, if, or when, or how they respond to the outstretched hand of God, but perhaps we can see the blessings that might be the symbols of their response to God for their sins, and His response to them.

21. MERCY FOR ALL OF US

Both Cain and Esau received some of that mercy, in the later stages of their lives, after the terrible sins. And I know we are able to have some of that mercy after the terrible sins in our lives, those that are repented of, over and over again, 70x7, by Gods grace.

Of Cain and Esau, God made the point through Paul, that events would turn out, that the elder would serve the younger. And it was so. Seth was the favoured one, and Cain moved away from that favoured family space. Jacob was also favoured and Esau moved away, yet it is recorded for us that Esau returned to give grace and favour to his younger brother. The moving away does not signify a turning of the back on God. It means that they knew their place was not with the favoured ones.

And again, Cain and Esau did not die as warranted, but enjoyed some covenantal blessings from God, as He promised them, directly to Cain, and through Isaac to Esau. Esau's blessings were rather like Jacob gave to some of his less favoured sons.

The Israelites themselves were promised great blessings but refused to repent, and eventually God gave them up altogether. Their covenantal relationship with God was lost. Now we wait to see how their repentance and how that reconciliation will proceed.

We are so black and white with some things. We need to rethink some of our "cast out" attitudes. Vengeance is not ours, but God's, and we need to leave it there.

When we ourselves go the way of Cain, or Esau, or Judah, or David, or Peter, or the Corinthian brother, as we so often do as well, and if we do not return, then we are lost.

But if we return from that position with repentance, with a desire to repair a breach, God has allowed us that return. And we can then be reconciled to Him. We cannot deny that.

We may not enjoy favoured positions, but that does not mean "lost to Him", or even "turned our back on Him". There is no need for me to be a queen or a ruler. I will be pleased to be a doorkeeper and receive His mercy.

May we emulate the lessons learned from the Father and His son. The more we strive to be like God the more we are in "the bundle of life in the Lord". Abigail prevented David from an act of revenge, keeping him from taking a life. May we also persuade our brothers and sisters who want to exclude those with whom they differ, and want to bring vengeful judgement on them for those differences.

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